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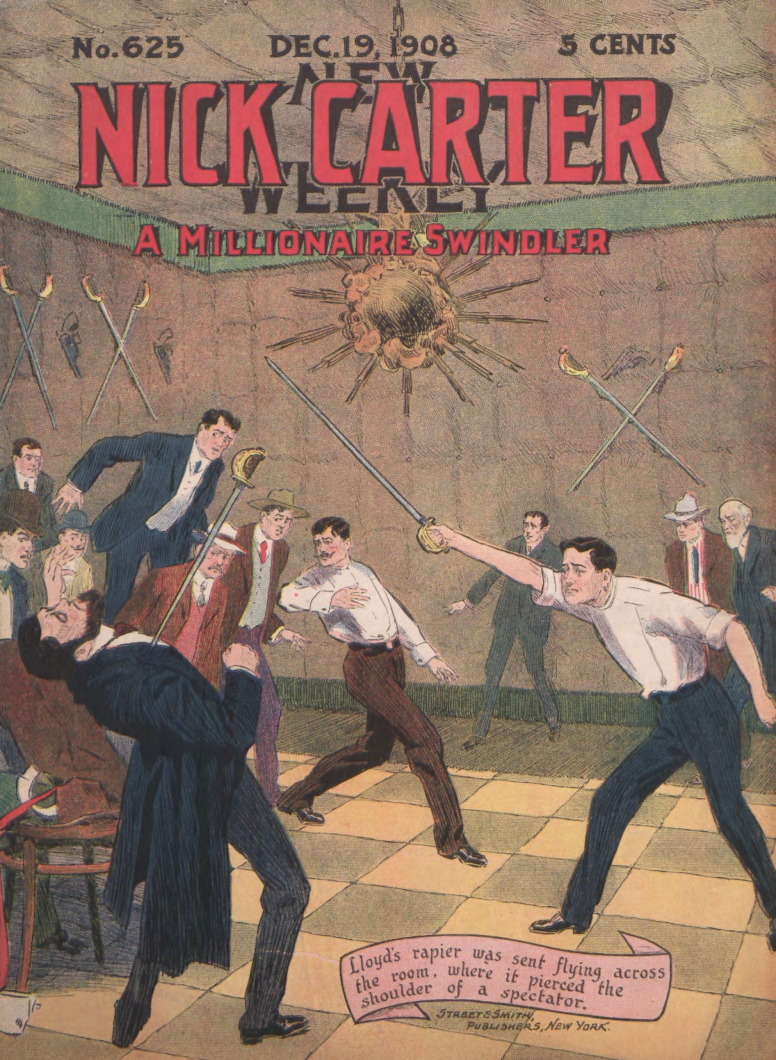
NEW NICK CARTER WEEKLY

A MILLIONAIRE SWINDLER



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NEW NICK CARTER WEEKLY

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A MILLIONAIRE SWINDLER;

OR,

Nick Carter's Exposure of a Stupendous Scheme.

Edited by CHICKERING CARTER.

CHAPTER I.

THE CASE OF YOUNG CODDINGTON.

"Well, Nick, it is up to you, now. If you wish to do a real bit of philanthropic work, you will find and expose this scoundrel; for that he does exist there can be no manner of doubt. That he works in the dark, and is the one really responsible for the faults of the many bank employees who have gone astray during the last two years, I am convinced. I have studied the matter closely and keenly—and tirelessly. Without knowing one single fact to substantiate what I say, I am, nevertheless, morally certain of it."

It was the police commissioner of the city of New York who made this emphatic statement to the detective. They were seated together in the latter's study, where the commissioner had stopped on his way down-town. He had begun the conversation by saying:

"Nick, I have come to you this morning with a case that isn't a case. I don't know whether you will agree with me in the position I have taken, or not;" and Nick had replied:

"Let me hear what it is, commissioner, and I can soon tell you."

From that point the following conversation took place:

"Nick, somewhere in this city, living in elegance and perhaps in refinement, outwardly, there is a man who is doubtless several times a millionaire, who is also a rascal of the first order. I want you to find that man."

"Well, commissioner?"

"He is, I am convinced, the one who is really at fault in many of the cases where bank employees have gone astray during the last two years—or longer ago than that."

"Isn't that rather a large statement, commissioner?"

"Perhaps, but I have studied the matter thoroughly. I have done it quietly, at my desk in the office, of course; but I have convinced myself, and now I want to convince you."

"I have already had something of the same idea, although I haven't given it much direct thought, commissioner," was the reply.

"I think the man is one who keeps himself entirely in the background, living and subsisting on the thefts of others. I believe that he keeps agents and runners working for him in just the same manner that the

'damage-suit lawyers' used to do it. Take the case of young Coddington, for instance."

"Well?"

"I cannot think of a better case to illustrate what I mean."

"I remember the case, but I would like to hear your version of it, commissioner."

"There was a young man who had lived an irreproachable life up to a time only a few months before he made his big steal."

"Yes."

"He lived not far from where I do. I used frequently to see him on the street. I knew him by sight—even had a bowing acquaintance with him."

"He was a fine young chap until he went wrong, I have been told," said Nick.

"Fine! He was that. I knew some things about him, and since it happened I have taken care to find out more. I can assure you that he lived an exemplary life, an irreproachable life, up to a time within less than three months of his fall."

"Wait a moment, commissioner. Have you seen young Coddington and talked with him, since the crime was committed?"

"No. I have seen nobody and talked with nobody in reference to what I am saying to you now. I have kept my suspicions a secret. You are the first person to whom I have mentioned the subject."

"Good."

"He was receiving-teller at the bank he robbed, as you know."

"Yes."

"His system was the simplest that could have been devised, and, therefore, was absolutely unsuspected—until the crash came."

"I know."

"Nevertheless, let me explain in my own way. I want to follow out my train of thought, exactly as I have figured it out."

"Very well."

"Coddington stole only from the large depositors."

"Yes."

"He worked only against those accounts which kept from fifty to three or four or five hundred thousand dollars balance at the bank all the time."

"I know."

"They were, of course, men who made large deposits, and who also drew large checks; and his system was to steal the *cash* they deposited. The checks, of course, went through in the regular way. Now, we will say, if you went to the bank to-day and deposited say thirty thousand dollars—twenty thousand in checks and ten thousand in cash, he would take the ten thousand in cash."

"I see."

"Inasmuch as you carried a balance of more than fifty thousand dollars all the time, and frequently ten times that sum—well, it was a very easy matter for him to fix up his slips so they would agree with the actual cash, and so leave nothing to be suspected."

"Yes—for a time. But it couldn't last very long."

"Nor did he intend that it should. He figured on three months time, or very near that, and, in fact, the exposure did not come until the time lacked only ten days of the three months."

"I remember."

"Coddington stole, in that manner, nearly four hundred thousand dollars in cash. He did it by working the accounts of nearly fifty different depositors."

"Yes."

"And he is now in Sing Sing—he is in Sing Sing prison while the really guilty party in that transaction is living in elegance in New York City, is driving about in his automobiles, is living part of the time aboard an elegantly appointed yacht no doubt, and is spending the four hundred thousand dollars that that poor boy stole."

"You don't *know* this to be so, commissioner?"

"As I said before, I am morally certain of it. I think you are, also; your present manner tells me that much."

"Well? I won't commit myself yet. Please go on."

"I will return to Coddington. I will continue to use him as an illustration."

"Yes."

"He was brought up in that bank. He went to it as a boy and worked his way up to what he was. He did it by his integrity, by his close application to business, by his absolute correctness, by his loyalty and his genial, pleasant manner with everybody."

"Yes."

"Three months before the exposure he fell in with people who, it is said, took him into bad company. Now the stereotyped answer to that is this: That people do not go into bad company unless they have a predilection that way. I know that to be false, and so do you."

"Frequently—yes."

"Coddington was less than thirty years old. He had a wife and one child. He lived happily. There was nothing in the world to induce him to seek bad com-

pany. He had no tastes of that sort. I know whereof I speak."

"Well?"

"The explanation is that he was taken into it the first time without his knowledge."

"And then——"

"Nick, if there is a well of pure water yonder and you drop one bit of filth into it, however small, it fouls the whole well. Isn't that so?"

"Yes."

"Well, Coddington, being pure, like the well, felt that he was fouled by contact with those people, whoever they were. He was led into something, I don't know what; but whatever it was it shamed him in his own sight, and to such an extent that he sought by every means he could devise to clear himself of it. It is probably the old story. The harder he tried to get out, the deeper he was mired."

"That is almost invariably the case."

"Then the tempter began his work. Then he was shown, in softly spoken sophistry, how he could extricate himself. The thing was put to him so plausibly that it seemed dead easy."

"I know how that is done."

"It was probably pointed out to him how with a few thousand dollars, of which he could easily possess himself, he could gloss everything over and escape the fault he had already committed, which probably then amounted to almost nothing at all. From that on it is the old story which I need not repeat to you."

"No."

"The possession of that wife and child, of whom he was so proud, was the lever the fiends used to pry him onward. He did not want to disgrace them; he thought he saw a way to avoid it. He fell. And fell again and again, until it reached the enormous sum I have mentioned."

"Yes."

"You remember that he stated in his confession that he had not personally used ten thousand dollars of the four hundred thousand he had stolen. He had given it all to a man named Croker, to invest for him. Twice he received large winnings in return, and four or five times he won smaller sums; but in no case were the winnings large enough to extricate him from his difficulties; and he was induced in each case to reinvest the money. Once, he had within twenty-five thousand dollars of the sum he required, and he tried then to restore that much and confess to the balance. But those devils wouldn't let him do that. It was not the game they were playing."

"Certainly not."

"And so he made his last big steal. He knew that he had only little more than a week then before the exposure would come, but his tempters assured him that a last big effort would pull him out clean."

"I remember it all, commissioner."

"He made the last big effort. He lost, of course. There was never any investment made for him in anything at all. Those men simply took his money and kept it."

"Certainly."

"And when the exposure came, and he sought them in his despair, he found nothing. The offices where he had met them were deserted, barren. The men with whom he had dealt were not known in the locality. The 'Mr. Croker,' who had been his 'friend,' was proven to have been another man who had masqueraded under Mr. Croker's name. Coddington had merely stolen for others, reaping none of the profits himself. Now, he is in Sing Sing while the real thieves are at large. But behind all those thieves is one man who is the real devil in the case. It is *that man whom I wish to find. The millionaire swindler.*"

CHAPTER II.

THE MASTER CRIMINAL.

"I appreciate the illustration you have given, commissioner," said the detective. "Now, let us get down to that chap whom you call the millionaire rascal."

"The illustration I have given is only one of hundreds that I could give, covering a period of several years."

"I appreciate that fact, also."

"That is the method by which the master criminal works."

"Yes."

"His victims are selected with great care. A young man like Coddington is picked out for the next one. He must be somebody who works in a bank, who has access to the cash, who is a trusted employee."

"Certainly."

"He need not necessarily be weak; he may be very strong. It is the work of the runners and agents to render him weak."

"Assuredly."

"And they have a score of different methods for doing that."

"Undoubtedly."

"I believe that sometimes they are on a man's track for a year or more before they begin to operate."

"There can be no doubt of that, commissioner. It would be their policy to win the confidence of a victim before actual work was begun; and in the case of a young man like Coddington that would take time."

"It certainly would."

"Half-confidence—partial confidence—would not do at all. The confidence must be entire; and I think that Coddington was a young man not easily won. Have you a copy of that confession of his?"

"No; but I know it almost by heart, I have studied it so carefully."

"By the way, commissioner, pardon me for asking, but is Coddington anything to you?"

"Not the least thing in the world save only that he is an unfortunate young man who has paid the penalty, and is still paying it, for his gullibility. I want to save other young men from going down-hill by the same road—and I want to get my hands on that master criminal."

"I understand you now."

"Nick, I believe that that fellow hobnobs with us day by day. I don't mean, perhaps, with you or me personally, because we don't go much into society; but I believe that he is in the 'swim' up to his ears. I think you will find him to be a member of exclusive clubs, a rider to hounds, a cotillion leader, an entertainer, a 'good fellow' as they are counted. I believe that at this moment his bank-account contains some of the money stolen by Coddington."

Nick was silent, and after a moment the commissioner continued:

"I want you to find him, Nick, no matter what the cost."

"I can try it."

"If you undertake it, you will accomplish it."

"Perhaps."

"My only misgiving in coming to you was the fear that I could not convince you of the correctness of my views. I feared lest you would pooh-pooh the whole idea."

"Quite the contrary, commissioner. I have long had the same idea, although it had not taken quite such a positive form as yours."

"You agree with me, then?"

"Yes."

"And you will undertake it?"

"Yes."

"Bully!"

"I am afraid it will be slow work, commissioner."

"Never mind how slow it is if you only succeed. That is the point."

"You see there is almost nothing to go by. The crime, so far as that particular man is concerned, is only another form of the confidence game."

"Certainly."

"And as you have said, the master criminal keeps himself in the background. Even if I succeed in finding out who he is—to my own satisfaction—he will be a hard man to prove anything against."

"And, therefore," said the commissioner with a smile, "you will like the case all the better."

"I cannot deny that, commissioner."

"I wish I had the time to help you work it out."

"And I; although I do think it is a case where I can work better entirely alone; even without the aid of my assistants."

"Perhaps so."

"Has it occurred to you, commissioner, that even now, at this moment, there are doubtless other victims in the course of preparation for the sacrifice?"

"Assuredly it has. If only we knew where the ax was to fall next time, we would be on Easy Street so far as this case is concerned. But that is something that we will never know until the ax has fallen."

"Quite true. And yet—I was only wondering in my own mind just how I would begin work on the case."

"Have you an idea?"

"No; I haven't formed one yet. Only there is one thing that is quite evident."

"What is that?"

"This master criminal and the gang that works with him or under him, are new men at the game. I mean by that, that I don't think he or they are among the known and recognized criminal class."

"Why not?"

"Because you would have had your suspicions directed toward them if that were so. We must look for a new set of swindlers; men who haven't yet gotten their pictures in the rogues' gallery."

"Possibly you are right about that."

"I am almost certain of it. I shouldn't wonder if the master criminal—him you call the millionaire swindler—makes it a condition of the men he employs, that their pictures have never been taken by the police."

"That would be a clever idea on his part. But how then does he find his agents?"

"In precisely the same way he finds his victims."

"Eh?"

"He educates them, or has them educated, for the work he wishes them to do, in just the same manner that they use later on in educating their victims to steal."

"I believe you are correct about that. I'll tell you why."

"Well?"

"I have been studying on this matter for almost two years. I have sent my men out from time to time to round up this or that confidence man; I have had many of them brought to headquarters, and I have talked with them. Usually, if assured that what they say will not be used against them they will talk rather freely with me."

"Yes. I realize that."

"In each case I have been forced to the conclusion that not one of those I have talked with is among the gang I want."

"Precisely."

"Red Morgan, Snaky Mike Creegan, and others seemed to me likely at first; but I don't believe that any of them are in this particular game I am after now."

"No; I should not suppose they were."

"So I think you are right in what you said a moment ago. You will have to begin work utterly in the dark, Nick."

"I usually do. And that is by far the best way, too, commissioner."

"Why so?"

"Because one is not misled by preconceived theories."

"That is so."

"I think I will start out in this case by using the Coddington incident. It is practically forgotten now. The crooks at least regard it as a back number. Coddington has been convicted and is in prison. Those who led him astray now believe that they are absolutely safe so far as he is concerned."

"Without doubt."

"I'll work up the Coddington case. I'll begin by going to Sing Sing and talking with him."

"Good."

"I think, if the warden will give me a whole day with him that I can induce him to tell me a great deal more than he told in his confession."

"I can arrange the interview for you, all right."

"Do so, then. I will go up there to-morrow morning. But, commissioner——"

"Well?"

"The affair must be kept quiet."

"I realize that."

"In making your arrangements with the warden, be particular to instruct him that it is not to be known that Nick Carter visits the prison."

"What name shall I use?"

"Use my own—with the warden. I'll make the rest of the arrangements with him after I get there."

"And you will go to-morow morning?"

"Yes."

"Will you let me know from time to time how you are getting on?"

"Yes; if there is anything to tell. But my own idea is that there won't be anything to report until the climax comes. The whole world will know it then. Did Coddington mention any names that had significance in making his confession, or in talks you had with him?"

"The only names he mentioned—the only ones he knew at all in connection with the affair—were names under which the men had posed."

"I had supposed that."

"One of them passed as a near relative of one rich man, another did the same thing in connection with one of our multimillionaires; and so on. They all had names that would impress a young man like Coddington."

"What name was given by the man who won his confidence first? Do you remember that?"

"Yes. He called himself Lloyd Churchill, and stated that he was an own cousin of the Duke of Marlborough."

"Well, that fellow is one of the necessary parties for me to find. Of course, the name means nothing; but he is evidently one of the master criminal's chief workers and one of the best ones. I'd like to find that chap."

"Oh, you'll find him, all right. You never started after a man yet that you didn't get him, Nick."

"I'll try, anyhow, commissioner."

"Then I'll say good morning and leave you now. So-long."

CHAPTER III.

THE VICTIM OF THE PLOT.

At eleven o'clock the following forenoon Nick Carter was seated in the private office of the warden of Sing Sing prison, and opposite him sat Daniel Coddington.

The young man was the picture of despair.

He had not yet recovered from the shock of the ter-

rible ordeal through which he had passed, and the ravages of his sorrow were still visible in his countenance, his bearing, and in every gesture he made.

Nick Carter, ever thoughtful, had taken the precaution to call upon the wife of the convict before he went to the prison, in order that he might carry to Coddington late news of her and of the child; and he did take with him many endearing messages which visibly brightened the cloud which hung so blackly over the young man's head.

The detective began the conversation by saying:

"Mr. Coddington, I have come here for the purpose of having a confidential talk with you. The warden has freed you from your duties here for the entire day so we can talk uninterruptedly. We will even dine here together, served from the warden's kitchen; we can go into the yard together at any time when you think you would enjoy being in the open air."

"Why have you done this, Mr. Carter?" asked the young convict.

"Because I want a long talk with you. Because I want to ask you many questions, and because, if possibly, I wish to win your entire confidence before we get through. You don't want other young men to go the way you have gone, do you?"

"Heaven forbid!" he exclaimed fervently.

"By the way, knowing that I was coming here to see you, I called last evening upon your good little wife, and the boy. I thought you would be glad to hear directly from them."

"Oh, Mr. Carter! That was good of you. Tell me about them, please."

"They are both quite well. Mrs. Coddington told me to give you all the love that she could send by word of mouth, and Daniel junior told me to 'Give my love to my papa.'"

Tears came into the young man's eyes, but he controlled them manfully.

"It was good of you," he murmured.

"Your wife gave me another message for you, Daniel."

"What was it, please?"

"She said: 'Tell him that when he comes out, I will be waiting for him. Tell him I know that while he was guilty in fact, he was never guilty at heart. Tell him that his wife and his boy will be true to him through everything, and that when this terrible time is over, we will find a way to be happy again.'"

Coddington left his chair and crossed to the window where he stood for a long time in silence. When he returned to the detective his face was composed and calm, and a new peace had come into it.

"I can face it all now, much better," he said. "You have brought me very great comfort, Mr. Carter. In return for what you have done, I will give you what you came here to secure; my entire confidence. I will answer to the best of my ability any question, or questions, you may care to ask."

"Thank you, Daniel. I may call you by your given name?"

"I very much prefer that you would do so."

"I want to go over, in part, your experiences before your arrest; before the exposure."

"I thought I went over them very thoroughly in my confession, Mr. Carter."

"So you did; that is, all the really salient points; all that referred directly to what you had done. But there are other things in connection with that time which you did not regard as important—and which were really not so, directly. But now they have assumed an importance which I will presently explain."

"I do not understand; but I will help you in any way I can."

"You will comprehend me better as I proceed."

"Very well, sir."

"Let us speak first of the person whom you knew as Lloyd Churchill."

An expression of pain crossed the countenance of the young man. He was silent a moment; then he said:

"I think that is one of the bitterest parts of my experience, Mr. Carter. That I should—no, that I could be so mistaken in a person, and that any person should have the heart to so basely deceive another. It is almost beyond comprehension."

"Tell me about that person," said Nick.

"What can I tell you about him? Only that he deceived me. I became very fond of him—more fond of him than I have ever been of any chum of my acquaintance; and we came to be chums. I took him to my home; I entertained him there. He dined with us frequently. He remained overnight many times. We became inseparable. My wife did not like him overwell, and yet she chided herself because she did not. There wasn't a fault to be found with him."

"A woman's intuition," said Nick.

"Yes; if only I had heeded it! But even she admitted more than once that her dislike for Churchill was unreasoning prejudice based upon nothing at all."

"How long had you known Churchill before there

was the least suggestion—mind you, the least suggestion in any form—of wrong-doing?"

"Oh, nearly a year."

"Where did you first meet him?"

"At the Hackmetack Country Club, where I had gone to play golf."

"And that was a year ago?"

"Rather more than a year, now. I have been here four months."

"How did you meet him? Were you introduced?"

"No; we met on the links. I was playing alone, with a caddie, and so was he. At the third tee-off we came together and quite naturally fell to talking. We finished the round together, and then played another round of eighteen holes for a cigar. By the time we had finished it we were good friends."

"And then——"

"We dined together, at the club, that evening. My wife was out of town at the time, for several days, so I did not think it necessary to go home."

"Doubtless Churchill selected that very opportunity for making your acquaintance."

"There is no doubt of that—now."

"You dined with him?"

"Yes."

"Then he was a member of the club?"

"Oh, yes; at that time he was—unquestionably."

"And then——"

"We returned to the city together. We arrived there in time for the roof-garden vaudeville. I think it was I who suggested that we go there. Anyhow, we did so."

"And afterward?"

"I bade him good night at the corner immediately after leaving the theater."

"And went directly home?"

"Yes."

"Was anything said about your meeting again?"

"I think there was a mutual expression of a desire to do so; no more than that."

"No appointment was made?"

"No."

"Did he at that time mention anything about his supposed family connections?"

"Not a word."

"When did he first do that?"

"Oh, it must have been more than a month—two, perhaps—after that before he did so."

"When did you see him the second time?"

"Exactly a week from the day I first met him. I had gone to the golf-grounds again."

"And you found him there?"

"Yes."

"The occasion was a repetition of the first evening, I suppose?"

"No; we parted there at the club. My wife was at home, and I wished to get there for my dinner."

"And your third meeting?"

"Was like the first and second; my wife was dining with her people that night, and so I invited Churchill to go to my club in the city with me and dine there. He did so. I had already conceived a great liking for him, and I put him up at the club. He had gone so far as to tell me that he was an Englishman. Indeed that was evident from his talk."

"From that time on your acquaintance ripened, I suppose?"

"Yes; rapidly."

"When did he tell you of his supposed relation to the Marlboroughs?"

"One evening at my own home. I had invited him there. He came about half-past eight. He is a fine musician—sings and plays, both, and does them both exquisitely. We were smoking in the back parlor when he picked up a paper that was lying on the table, and remarked:

"'I see that my titled cousin has got his name in the papers again.

"'Who is that?' I asked him.

"'Why, Marlborough,' he replied. 'I am second cousin to the duke. But pray don't mention the fact among our acquaintances, Coddington. I don't care to pose as the cousin of a duke.'

"I promised not to do so, of course. The matter was rarely mentioned between us after that."

"But you were all the while conscious that he was allied to the nobility, eh?"

"Certainly. I suppose it impressed me, although I was not aware of it."

"After that you became intimate."

"Gradually, yes. I am not given to making friends indiscriminately. In fact, I have always been rather inclined the other way; but an intimacy did grow up between us. We took to addressing each other as Dan and Lloyd quite naturally."

"And you met frequently, of course."

"Almost every day, in one place or another."

"He had plenty of money?"

"Oh, yes. He kept an automobile; he spent money freely, but not too much so. He was quite delicate about that. He came several times and took us riding in his car. Oh, he played the part with a perfection

of detail that surpasses comprehension, when one stops to consider all that he did."

"During this time—during his preliminary work upon you, was there ever anything said about gambling, or fast company of any sort?"

"Never. He seemed exemplary in all his habits."

"Did he appear to have many friends?"

"No; in fact, he said that he had none in this country at all; merely a few acquaintances to whom he had been introduced by an English friend who had returned to London. In fact, it was his evident loneliness that partly attracted me to him. He used to say often that my friendship was a godsend to him as he would have been quite alone otherwise."

"And what excuse did he give for remaining in this country?"

"None whatever; and I never asked him why he did so."

"Naturally not. Where did he live?"

"At the Hotel Mammoth. He had a suite of three rooms there."

"Now, as accurately as you can, will you give me a personal description of the man?"

"I will try."

CHAPTER IV.

MAKING A MENTAL PHOTOGRAPH.

"What was his apparent age?" asked the detective, continuing the conversation.

"Approximately my own, I should say. Certainly not much older, if any."

"And his appearance?"

"Quite English, if you know what that means. He even affected a monocle at times, but I chaffed him about it and he dropped it."

"Smooth shaven?"

"Yes; and handsome, I should say. Certainly an attractive-looking man. Rather on the blond order, though not pronouncedly so. His eyes are a grayish-blue. His lips are full, and mobile; they have quite a bow to them. His teeth are perfect. His eyes are rather wide apart, I should say."

"Tall or short?"

"Just my height exactly; five feet eleven."

"Walks—how?"

"Erect—very—as if he were trained for a soldier."

"That is a good point. More than likely he was. There is no doubt in your mind about his being English?"

"Not the slightest. It stuck out all over him."

"Did you notice any peculiar characteristic about him?"

"He had at times a peculiar twitching of the eyebrows—like that;" and Coddington imitated it for Nick's benefit.

"At what times did you notice the twitching?"

"Whenever he was deeply interested in anything he was doing. For example, he was very fond of golf, and it was a real fondness; the only real thing about him, I think now. But whenever he teed-off, or if he was putting on the green and had a difficult stroke to make, that twitching would appear."

"Good; any mark upon him?"

"No; not that I noticed."

"Broad shoulders? Well built?"

"Yes; like an athlete."

"His manners were good?"

"Always perfect. He never made a miss in that respect. I still think that he is allied to good people."

"What was his specialty in athletics?"

"Fencing. He was a master at it. He was also a splendid shot with a pistol—and a perfect horseman. I saw an evidence of it once."

"When was that?"

"One day at the country club. A horse that a lady member had ridden there became unruly. Churchill mounted it and subdued it in no time."

"It is evident that he has been in the English army. Was there ever any suggestion of any other name that belonged to him?"

"No; I think not."

"He talked fluently?"

"Oh, yes, and spoke several languages. French, German."

"Any gold filling in those good teeth of his?"

"No; at least, not visibly."

"Was he profane?"

"Never."

"What, then, was his favorite expression, in exclamation? Did he say 'By Jove!' or what?"

"Oh, yes; he used 'By Jove!' often enough. I believe all Englishmen do that. But he did have another one which was quite odd and unusual. I have heard him make use of it involuntarily on the golf-ground."

"Good! That is what I am after. Now, before you tell me what it is, tell me when and how he made use of it."

"Well, to tell the truth I never heard him use it at all save in the game of golf. It was when his whole attention was centered on the game. If he made a

splendid drive, or if I did so, he would exclaim invariably, 'Jiminy Peters, look at that!' or 'Jiminy Peters, old chap!' The expression was 'Jiminy Peters,' and several times in a joking way I called him Jiminy or Jiminy Peters."

"I'll venture that he didn't like it when you did so."

"No; it seemed to offend him, so I desisted."

"He smoked, you say?"

"Yes."

"Cigarettes, or cigars, or a pipe?"

"All three; but he preferred cigars—and by the way, Mr. Carter."

"Well?"

"He always set his teeth into them as if he were going to bite them in two; and when he cast one aside you could see that diagonal mark of his perfect teeth straight across the stub; that is, not straight across, but diagonally so."

"I understand. What kind of hands did he have?"

"Very delicate, rather beautiful hands for a man. He was somewhat of a dandy. He always kept his hands manicured, and he dressed perfectly."

"Daniel, do you happen to know of any manicure he patronized?"

"Why, I don't know but I do. I telephoned to him from the bank one day to meet me after hours, and he made the appointment for Broadway and Thirtieth Street. I arrived there a little ahead of time, and soon saw him coming from a stairway across the street. I remember now that there was a manicure's sign in several of the windows above it, and I noticed that he had been having his nails attended to. The name on the sign was Page."

"That is a good point—the manicure. I'll have my nails fixed up when I get back to the city. Did he wear any rings?"

"No."

"Did he affect stick-pins?"

"Oh, yes. He had several rather nice ones."

"Describe all of them to me."

"There was one, the head of a greyhound made of ivory with a ruby for the eye; another, just a knot of gold with a diamond in the center. Another was the letter X made of gold, and with a ruby in the center, where the bars cross."

"What shaped collar did he usually wear?"

"Always the same sort of collar—one with broken points."

"Did he carry a cigarette-case, or cigar-case?"

"Both."

"Describe them, please."

"The cigarette-case is gold with a monogram set in brilliants. The letters on it are 'J. M.' He said it was a present from an old friend and bore his monogram. The cigar-case is leather, black, with silver mountings. It is much worn and has no distinguishing mark save that one of the halves of it has once had a round hole in it, as if made by a bullet. The hole has been expertly mended, leather of the same quality having been sewed into it; but the place can be seen if one looks closely."

"More of the soldier in that, Daniel. That is probably the reason he carries that case—because it *has* had a bullet through it at some time in his career, and he is sentimentally fond of it. I won't forget that cigar-case. Did he carry a cane? Englishmen usually do so."

"Always."

"What sort of a cane did he affect?"

"I think he must have had dozens of them. He always appeared with a different one."

"Nothing in that, then, unless he had some peculiarity in the use of canes. Did he?"

"Not in walking; but in standing and talking when he had a cane in his hands, he invariably stuck it through his arms at the elbows and behind his back. He would do that two or three times during a five minutes' conversation on the street."

"Is he right-handed?"

"Yes."

"Any peculiarity about his use of a handkerchief?"

"Mr. Carter, the questions you ask are really remarkable. They bring to mind so many things that I had forgotten or only noticed in a casual manner."

"What about the handkerchief?"

"He always carried it in his hip pocket, for one thing—the left hip pocket; and he always used it with his left hand. I don't think I ever saw him make use of it with his right. Again, in taking it from his pocket he always gave it a flirt before he used it, snapping it out as one would do if one were flicking at a fly."

"Those are good points, too. Do you know if any particular search was made for him at the time of your arrest?"

"I don't think there was much effort in that direction, Mr. Carter. I was asked for a description of the men I had been with, and I gave his, in a haphazard way. Not at all as I have given it to you. You will have to ask about the other men of that party."

"I don't care anything about them. I will find them easily enough when I have discovered Churchill. It

is better to concentrate upon one than to scatter my energies. I think, with your description, I can find this fellow, sooner or later. Do you think of anything else about him?"

"I have only thought of these things because your questions brought them out."

"The man looked the gentleman in every particular, did he?"

"Yes, I am convinced that he has been one; that he has been a member of good society. I believe that he belongs to a good family."

"When he walked, did he toe in, or out?"

"Neither. I noticed often that he seemed to walk with his feet pointing straight in front of him."

"That means that if he was in the army at all, it was in the cavalry branch of the service. He was nearly six feet tall, so he would be in the Heavies. How much does he weigh?"

"A hundred and eighty-two; twelve pounds more than I. We were on the scales one day not long before I saw the last of him. There is another thing, too, that I happen to think of."

"What is that?"

"He has a habit of pushing his hat to the back of his head, and then instantly straightening it again."

"Good; in which side of his mouth does he carry his cigar?"

"The right side, always; and he holds it there, rarely removing it save to flick away the ashes when he instantly returns it."

"Doesn't that make him turn his head a little toward the left when the cigar gets a bit short?"

"It does; yes. I have noticed that; but he never smokes a cigar more than half-through. He throws it aside and lights a fresh one."

"Smokes a great deal, then?"

"Constantly, when he is where he can do so."

"Now, Daniel, that will do for the description. It is a very good one. I will be glad if you will tell me now exactly how you were roped into the first phase of your undoing. It is an unpleasant subject, I know, but I would like to hear about it."

CHAPTER V.

THE CONFIDENCE MAN AND HIS VICTIM.

"I had not seen Churchill for several days when the first incident happened," said Coddington, settling back in his chair. "I recall the circumstance now with some amazement, because I am convinced that if the same thing were to happen to me again under like circumstances, I would do now as I did then—were it not for this lesson I have had."

"Well, tell me about it."

"He had agreed to dine at my home on a certain evening, but he did not appear; neither did he send any message. That was unlike him, I thought, and I was worried as well as annoyed. But when several succeeding days went by without my seeing or hearing anything of him, I became anxious."

"And made inquiries?"

"I had already telephoned to the hotel several times, but to be told in each case that he was not there and that it was not known when he would return. I think it was the fourth or the fifth day of his absence—that is, that I had not seen him—when I went to the hotel in person to make inquiries."

"And you found him there, of course."

"Eh! How could you guess that?"

"Because that absence and the final bringing you to the hotel would be a part of the game he was playing."

"Do you think so? I had not thought of that. Well, I did find him there—in his rooms."

The detective smiled.

"I think I know now very nearly what you are about to tell me," he said. "But go on."

"My name was telephoned to his room from the ground floor of the hotel, and word came back that I was to go right up. I did so. I found him in his rooms only partly dressed, and looking the picture of despair."

"Yes; that is what I expected," said the detective. "But I won't anticipate you. Please go on with your story exactly as everything happened."

"When I entered the room he leaped to his feet with an exclamation of joy, but he instantly sank back again to his former attitude, and without really so much as greeting me; and I heard him groan and curse under his breath. I was really alarmed about him."

"He intended that you should be. Well?"

"'What in the world is the matter?' I asked him, crossing the room to his side and resting one hand on his shoulder. He shook it off as if it was offensive, and made no reply.

"I repeated the question, and did so several times, until at last he replied, somewhat crossly, I thought:

"'There is nothing you can do, Dan. I have made a jolly ass of myself, that's all, and now—well, you I must pay the fiddler; that's all.'

"'What are you talking about?' I demanded of him.

"Well, Mr. Carter, at first I could get nothing out of him at all, but after laboring for upward of half an hour with him he finally told me a strange story about gambling being the curse of his family; about how he had forsworn it always; about how the passion for it came over him at times until it was almost uncontrollable, and——"

"Yes," said Nick. "I can imagine just about what he told you in regard to that. And he went on to say, did he not, that on that evening when he had promised to dine with you, he met some old acquaintances from the other side who led him off and with whom he finally was induced to play at cards."

"Why, sir, one would think that you had heard him tell the story."

"I didn't hear *him* tell it, but I have heard it. It is a very old story, Daniel; one that has been used many times."

"And I swallowed it whole!"

"Never mind that. Go on."

"Well, the upshot of it all was that he had lost——"

"You mean that he *said* he had lost."

"Yes; he said he had lost eight thousand dollars. He named the amount in English money, but that is what it amounted to."

"Well?"

"He said that he had cabled home for the money—I have neglected to tell you that he had told me many times about his father's beautiful place in Sussex, about his father's immense income and his own allowance, and I had swallowed all that. He lived in a style that convinced me it was true."

"I have no doubt of it."

"Well, he told me that he had cabled for the money, but that it had not come. He could not understand why unless his father was temporarily absent from home, and the cable was awaiting his return unopened.

"While I did not approve of gambling, I felt very sorry, indeed, for him, and told him so; at the same time I expressed a regret that I was unable to help him out of his difficulty."

"That was what he was waiting for. And then——"

"'Why, old chap,' he said to me, 'I haven't left these rooms since the thing happened. The worst feature about the case is that I did not lose the money to one of my own friends, but to a chap to whom they presented me at the club where we played. He's an American. He's a stockbroker down-town, in what you call The Street. I'm ashamed to put my nose out of doors for fear I'll meet him—and you know I *must* pay him the very first time I see him.'

"'Perhaps the money will come by to-morrow morning,' I ventured. 'In the meantime, put on your clothes and go home with me. You shall dine there and spend the evening. It will cheer you up, and——'

"But he interrupted me. He would not even listen to the suggestion.

"'I dare not,' he insisted. 'Why, I wouldn't run the chance of meeting that man Croker—I wouldn't run the chance of meeting him——'"

"So; that is where Croker comes into the game, is it?" said Nick.

"Yes. He went on: 'I wouldn't run the chance of meeting that man without the cash in my pocket to pay him, not for twice, not for three times the amount. Dan, I have locked myself in this room ever since that night. I have told the clerks down below to say that I was suddenly called out of town. It is terrible to be placed in a position like this.'

"'It must be,' I agreed. 'I wish I could help you.'

"He clutched at me as a drowning man seizes a stick of wood.

"'Can you? Can't you?' he cried out; but I shook my head.

"'I haven't got that much money in all the world,' I told him.

"'But you could get it for me, Dan. Mine will be here in another day or so, surely. The gov'nor won't fail to send it the moment he receives my cable. Wouldn't your bank let me have it on my note with your indorsement?' he asked me.

"'No,' I told him. 'The bank doesn't do business that way, and if I were to put my name to paper in that way I'd be fired to-morrow. It's against the rules.'

"Well, Mr. Carter, we talked on in that strain for some time, and I finally left him; but I stopped there the next morning on my way down-town, only to find him in worse despair than ever; and again he asked me if I couldn't get it out of the bank in some way. He was so positive that he would have the money in a day or so more.

"The thing worked upon my nerves. I really liked Churchill. He had many lovable qualities."

"I have no doubt of it," said the detective grimly.

"I left that day. A very large deposit was made to an account which was always very large, and almost before I realized what I was doing I held out eight thousand dollars of the deposit and put it in my pocket.

Later, I telephoned to him that I had what he wanted, and to meet me when the bank closed.

"He did so, and we went together to the office of Daniel Croker—elegantly fitted offices they were in lower Broadway—where I was introduced to Mr. Croker, and where Churchill paid over the eight thousand dollars.

"But I was very unhappy that night. I did not sleep. In the morning I was worn out and almost beside myself with worry—and you can imagine my pleased surprise when I found my friend Churchill waiting for me on the bank steps.

"'Dan,' he said, as soon as I appeared, 'I have got good news for you. I thought I'd come right down with it. The gov'nor has sent me the money. It got here last night. I induced the people at the hotel to advance the cash for me before the banks open, and here it is. I knew you'd be worried, old chap, and I couldn't keep you waiting a moment longer than was absolutely necessary.'

"Well, you can imagine my change of feelings when I replaced that eight thousand dollars in the bank funds; and the implicit faith I had in Churchill after that."

"Yes."

"We became more inseparable than ever after that. We were together constantly when I was not at the bank or at home. We played golf together, and we went to other places. The man seemed to fascinate me."

"I can understand it."

"And he was playing with me all the time!"

"Yes. Of course. The return of that eight thousand dollars was to put the seal on the confidence you already had in him and so make it absolute. That was necessary for what they still expected to do. They got almost four hundred thousand out of you finally."

"Yes."

"And it is doubtful if they spent twenty thousand to get it. But go on."

"Well, it was nearly a month before he gambled again; but he did do it—that is, he said he did, and that time it was thirteen thousand."

"Did he disappear again as he did the first time?"

"No; he sent for me that time."

"Oh, yes. Well?"

"He told me all about it. He had lost to the same man, Croker. Churchill didn't want to be seen out of town till he had paid the money, and he also want me to send the cable to his father for him."

"Oh, he did! So they had a confederate on the other side. Well, you sent it?"

"Yes; and on the strength of it supplied the thirteen thousand for him as I had done the eight."

"That amount wasn't forthcoming as the other had been, was it?"

"He showed me a message the next morning, purporting to be from his father, in which was said words to this effect: 'I send you two thousand pounds. Can't spare more to-day. Will cable balance in three days. Try not to be so reckless.'"

"He didn't offer to give you that ten thousand dollars, did he?"

"Yes; he offered to do so. But he had another suggestion. He said that Croker had put him next to a good thing and he proposed that we take that money and try it. I demurred at first, but was finally persuaded, against my will—and with the result that we won, and when the bank closed that night I had replaced the money—the thirteen thousand dollars, and I had besides that nearly three thousand dollars to the good in my pocket."

"It looked like easy money, didn't it?"

"It certainly did, Mr. Carter. I lost my head from that moment."

"Assuredly. That was what they had to steal first; your head. And after that, all the money was lost through the hands of Croker?"

"Yes."

CHAPTER VI.

HE IS THE MAN I WANT.

This recital has served to show with what deliberation a gang like the one described carries on its operations.

First, the victim is selected, but not until after careful watching to discover every characteristic of the man. Then one of the gang is put at him, just as Churchill was put at Coddington, and after that neither time nor money are taken into account. The former is used until the time is ripe for the last act, and the latter is expended without stint, for it is known that the profits will be enormous.

But to carry on an operation of that sort, a large capital is necessary—from a hundred thousand dollars up.

Even in this case, of leading a young bank clerk to steal the money entrusted to him, the man who called himself Churchill lived at a hotel where he en-

penses could not have been less than twenty dollars a day, and he continued to do that for a year; he kept an automobile, and he had many other running expenses which aggregated doubtless near fifty; so the rogues laid out upward of twenty thousand dollars before they got any return.

But they would have spent a hundred thousand had it been necessary to carry their point, which was to land Coddington in Sing Sing.

And they were doing this same sort of thing all the time.

With four hundred thousand dollars added to their capital they would at once change the scene of operations. They would leave New York for the time being and work elsewhere.

Nick Carter knew that perfectly well.

"The only way by which I can find the head of this affair," he told himself, when he was on the train bound for New York, "the only way in which I can come up with the 'main guy' of the outfit, is to trace him through the man Churchill; therefore, I must find Churchill; and there would be no use looking for Churchill in New York just now. He is in London or in Paris, or he has joined a party traveling in Egypt, or he is an invited guest on somebody's private yacht. Wherever he is, he is no longer Churchill. I'll visit the manicure. If she happens to be pretty, Churchill would say a lot of foolish things to her, possibly."

The manicure-parlors were closed, but he went around there the following morning, and discovered that Miss Page was not only pretty, but was exceedingly attractive.

"I was induced to come to you because of another customer of yours," he told her, while his fingers were soaking in the little glass bowl.

"Yes?" she replied brightly, "who was that, please?"

"Mr. Churchill."

"Churchill?" Her brows knitted in a puzzled frown. "I don't seem to recall the name. What sort of a looking man is he?"

"Possibly you know him as Mr. Lloyd," said Nick, not heeding the question. "It is his given name, but I imagine he sometimes uses it in a bantering way as his surname."

"Oh, Mr. Lloyd. Yes, indeed! I remember him very well. He is abroad now, isn't he?"

"I believe so. He's a handsome chap, don't you think so, Miss Page?"

"Oh, I don't know. Yes, I suppose he is. He is certainly gifted. He is one of the most entertaining men I ever met. He has traveled so extensively; and he served in the army in India, you know."

"Yes."

"He came in to bid me good-by before he went away, and he brought me a little present; at least, he called it a little one, although I thought it a big one. It is this stick-pin that I am wearing now."

It was the stick-pin that Coddington had described as a knot of gold with a stone in the center of it. There could be no doubt that she was referrring to Churchill.

"Did he tell you where he was going?" Nick hazarded.

"Yes; and promised to send me some postals from there, too; but he has forgotten all about it."

"I would like very much indeed to find out where he is. I want to communicate with him or see him, and I am going abroad to-morrow, myself," said Nick.

"Wait a moment. I have his address—at least, the one he gave me—written down somewhere. It is an address that he said would always reach him."

She left him and crossed to a small desk at the opposite side of the room where she searched among some papers, presently returning with one of them in her hand.

"You may copy it after I get through with your hands," she said. "There it is: 'Chester C. Lloyd, the Hurry Club, 17 Rue de Fer, Paris.' But why did he give me his name as Lloyd, if it is really Churchill? I don't like that. There was no reason why he should give a false name?"

"Don't you see that he merely transposed it? Chester Churchill Lloyd, instead of Chester Lloyd Churchill?"

"All the same I don't like it. Do you know him very well?"

"No; not very well. Why?"

"Because—well, I had some photographs of my own, just taken. They were lying on that table one day when he was here, and he took one of them without my consent or knowledge. I did not discover that he had done so till after he had gone, but I would like him to return that picture."

"Naturally. When I see him I will ask him about it."

"If he had asked for one I would have given it to him; but I don't like his taking it in that manner."

"I don't, either. All through?"

"Yes; fifty cents, please."

"Oh, we will make it a dollar this time, Miss Page."

"Thank you. Don't you want to copy that address?"

"I have already done so. I have taken it down in my recollection. I won't forget it."

"And please don't forget my message if you see Mr. Lloyd—Churchill."

"I won't, Miss Page."

Outside as he walked rapidly along the detective repeated to himself several times: "Chester C. Lloyd, the Hurry Club, 17 Rue de Fer, Paris. Iron Street we would call it in this country. Every man has his weak spot, his yellow streak. A pretty face is Chester Lloyd's weak point. He meant to send that pretty Miss Page some postal cards and other things and he meant to write to her when he went away, but I'll wager that he forgot all about her before the ship he was on passed Sandy Hook. But he has that picture—and if I run across him, I can make use of the incident. And I *will* run across him, somewhere."

He went to his own home then, and from there telephoned for a stateroom on a Cunarder that was to sail that afternoon. Two hours later he was on his way to the steamship. Five days later, he was in London, and the following morning after that he was in Paris.

But he was not there as Nick Carter. When he registered at the Grand Hotel that day, he wrote: Carter Nichols, of Montana, U. S. A., and he had an English valet with him who was really a Scotland Yard detective whose services he had engaged; and he had baggage galore. He engaged an expensive suite of rooms, and, without ostentatiously doing so, still managed to make it appear that he was a very rich young man from the far West, in America.

He knew that it would not be long before he would be spotted as a possible victim by the powers that prey; he had hopes that possibly Chester Lloyd, as we will hereafter refer to him, might seek him out, for that Lloyd was in Paris, spending his share of the money taken from young Coolinggood, he had not a doubt.

Still, he did not purpose awaiting such an uncertain event; he meant to look for Lloyd.

That the man would be somewhere where there were pretty women about, he did not doubt; but first of all he intended to investigate that address given him by Miss Page.

"'An address that will always reach me,'" he repeated to himself; and he called his detective-valet.

"Jenks," he said, "I wish you to find out for me as quickly as possible, all the information you can obtain about the 'Hurry Club,' located at number 17 Rue de Fer. I never heard of the Rue de Fer, did you?"

"Yes, sir. It is a little short street—a sort of cul-de-sac, over in the Latin Quarter."

"And the Hurry Club? Have you heard of that, also?"

"Yes, sir. I have been inside of it, frequently."

"Then you are known there?"

"Oh, not at all. That is to say I am not known there for what I am. I am known there, to a very few of the frequenters of the place—a very few, sir—as Mr. Jenkins, a London tradesman."

"Good. That's all right. I am playing in luck. Now, do you think it would be a proper place for me to visit in my present character, as a young mine-owner from Montana?"

"Quite; if you are seeing the sights, and have had a little to drink—presumably. It is really a gambling-club, you know, sir. Only a small game, however. It is mostly frequented by English-speaking people, although everybody can go there who wishes to do so."

"All right. You may take me there to-night, Jenks."

"Very good, sir. As your valet?"

"No; as Mr. Jenkins. We'll be friends out together on a tentative bat; eh?"

"Very good, sir. May I make a suggestion?"

"Certainly. What is it?"

"I know my Paris as well as I do my London. Better, in some ways. If you were to tell me just what and whom you are seeking I might be able to assist you more definitely, particularly as you are mentioning the Hurry Club."

Nick had merely engaged the services of this man to assist him in some of the detail work of the case, but now he realized the logic of what Jenks said; and, after a moment, he replied:

"All right, Jenks. Listen to this and see if it tells you anything."

"Very good, sir."

"I am seeking a man who weighs about a hundred and eighty pounds; smooth shaven; gray-blue eyes; always carries a cane; walks with his toes straight in front of him, like a cavalryman; educated; evidently of good family, though now a crook; holds his cigar in his mouth till it's half-smoked out; bites it almost through with a double set of perfect teeth; carries a cane and shoves it through his arms behind his back and removes it, and does this frequently while standing and talking at the same time; has a habit of shoving his hat up to the back of his head as it becomes displacing it; carries a gold cigarette-case with a mono-

gram on it, in brilliants; carries an old leather cigar-case that has had a bullet through it some time or other, and has been mended; says 'Jiminy Peters!' when he is pleased and isn't thinking of what he is saying; is instantly and rather powerfully enamored of every pretty feminine face he sees, but forgets it the moment it is out of his sight; is a brilliant talker and a very taking chap; five feet eleven in height; a fine swordsman, and a splendid shot with a pistol, and—— Well, I guess that will suffice for the present. Do you happen to know such a man, Jenks?"

"Yes, sir, I do; and you have described him most perfectly."

"Indeed! You don't say so! Well, who is he?"

"He is Captain Chester Lloyd, sir, but he was kicked out of the army for cheating at cards three years ago."

"That's the man, Jenks. Gee; I was playing in luck when I found you!"

CHAPTER VII.

A RESORT FOR DUELISTS.

"Mr. Carter," said the English detective, "I hope you won't think that I speak egotistically if I tell you something about myself, sir."

"Not at all, Jenks; not at all. What is it?" replied Nick.

"This, sir: You just now said that you were playing in luck when you found me because I recognized the description you gave of Captain Chester Lloyd."

"Yes; well, I meant it, every word of it."

"Very good, sir, and thank you; but I should tell you that that is my specialty. That is what I wished to say that I was afraid you would think was egotistical. I am what the crooks call a 'moniker man.' I never forget a face, no matter how it may be disguised, and it is because every feature and every expression of a face is somehow engraved upon my memory. With me it is not an achievement; it is a talent; almost a second sight. I am not much good at some of the branches of detective work, but I carry in my recollection a complete cyclopedia of all the faces I have ever seen, and of the characteristics that go with those faces. I remember them just as an expert chess-player remembers every move of a game he is playing; and so when you described Captain Lloyd just now, I had his picture as quite as plainly as if he had been standing there. It is my own peculiar talent; that is all, sir."

"You should be almost invaluable to your department."

"They tell me that I am so, sir; although they make fun of me for my shortcomings, just the same."

"That is only human nature, Jenks. Now, tell me something about Lloyd."

"He is a much older man than he appears; he is thirty-six. He comes from one of the best families in England, and is the third son of a peer. He was a brilliant student at Oxford, graduated with honors, entered the army, and rose rapidly for personal bravery and because he was liked and admired by all. But he inherited a proclivity for gambling, and it got him into no end of trouble. He fought several duels and finally in one of them killed his best and closest friend. That seemed to break him up; he did not recover from it. He took to drinking rather hard, and from that went from bad to worse until one by one his brother officers shunned him. He had himself transferred to another regiment, but that didn't do much good, and finally he was caught cheating at cards—and that finished him."

"Sure."

"Still, being who he was, he was given the opportunity to resign his commission and get out. He refused, and was kicked out. Since then he has gone steadily downward. He became a professional gambler—but I have never heard that he did worse than that until a moment ago when you told me he has become a crook. I did not know that."

"It is nevertheless true."

"I do not doubt you, sir; but it surprises and pains me. I know the other members of his family. He has been abroad somewhere for more than a year; I have been told that he was in America."

"That is true; he was."

"I know that for a time before he disappeared, he suddenly seemed to be very flush with coin. Now, if he is in Paris, as you seem to suspect, he will be found, sooner or later, at the Hurry Club."

"Then we are likely to find him there?"

"Yes, sir; I think so. May I ask you some questions about your business with him?"

"Why?"

"Well, sir, you may call it sentimental, or what you like, but unless it should come actually to fisticuffs one day I should very much dislike to be instrumental in his arrest. I have in my heart, despite his crimes, a very positive affection for him, although he does not suspect it. He was a good friend to me when

I needed one; his eldest brother is now my good friend."

"I appreciate your feelings, Jenks, and am glad you have told me about it."

"Thank you, sir."

"So far as I can see I will have no cause to place him under arrest. In point of fact he has done nothing for which I could arrest him—here. In New York City I could do so, but he has not committed an extraditable offense. He has merely aided and abetted in a scheme of swindling."

"I see, sir."

"My business with him is chiefly to obtain some information he has. If I can induce him to give me that information, I shall not further trouble him."

"Thank you for telling me, sir."

"If you will give me your attention, I will tell you the whole story, and then you will be as well informed as I."

"Yes, sir."

And the detective then recited to Jenks the whole story of the undoing of Daniel Coddington, omitting nothing, not even the interview with Coddington at the prison; and he closed the recital with this statement:

"So you see, Jenks, it is not Lloyd I am after, but the big man who is behind him. That is the man I wish to find. He is the person who is really responsible, not only for Coddington's downfall, but also for the fact that Lloyd has become a worse character than you had supposed him to be."

"I understand, sir."

"It is the millionaire rascal whom I want to find—and Lloyd is the only man, just now, who can put me on his track."

"I am very much afraid, sir, that the captain will utterly refuse to assist you in the matter. He is a great stickler for some things, and loyalty to his word is one of them, notwithstanding the changes in his character. It is incongruous, I know; but it is so."

"In that case I will shadow him or have him shadowed until he takes me to the man I desire to find."

"That can be done, of course."

"Now, tell me, does he know you as Jenks, the detective, or as Jenkins, the tradesman?"

"Nobody knows me as Jenks, the detective—outside of Scotland Yard, and the few persons I have served in that capacity. But he knows me as Jenks, a former gamekeeper on his father's estates."

"So that is the secret of your liking for him."

"Yes; I have known him since he was a boy. I am fifty-six years old, Mr. Carter."

"Well, you don't look it by ten years. How, then, shall we appear at the Hurry Club?"

"I should say just as we intended to originally. If Lloyd is there I will call him aside and tell him that I am at present acting as your valet—as valet to Mr. Carter Nichols; and I will make you acquainted with each other. After that you can follow out any policy you see fit."

"But I want you to act out a policy, also. I wish you to do your utmost to find out who the millionaire crook is, where he is, and what else he is. He is the man I wish to nail."

"Very good, sir. I will not scruple to do all I can in that direction."

"You need have no misgivings about my attitude toward Lloyd. If he keeps out of the United States, if he keeps himself away from New York, he will have nothing more to fear from me—that is, in regard to what he has already done. I won't say, of course, that he might not get in my way later on for what he yet may do."

"I understand you, sir."

"I would like to get on the track of the fellow who called himself Daniel Croker, in that deal. He is an American crook, all right, but he should be on this side by now, and is probably not far from the vicinity of Lloyd."

"Very good, sir. Now, if you will permit me to make some changes in my dress, I will take you to the Hurry Club."

"What! So early in the day?"

"Oh, yes, sir. They begin play over there as early as two in the afternoon. We will arrive there about four or half-past. We will find several of the tables busy by that time."

"Tell me something about the character of the men I will find there, please."

"You are likely to find all characters and all classes—at least, you will when the evening deepens. By midnight there should be rather a representative crowd."

"How many?"

"Oh, anywhere from fifty to two hundred persons, depending upon the night, the play, and who happens to be in the city that frequents the club. I suppose I need not suggest, sir, that you should take great care to avoid anything that will give cause for a quarrel."

"Why do you say that?"

"Because the club is really a resort for the so-called what I might call the professional duellists of Paris.

I do not refer to that class of duelists who make a farce of it, but to those who fight, when they do fight, to maim or kill. The best swordsmen, the most expert pistol-shots of Germany, Italy, and France make their headquarters there when they are in Paris. They are ever ready to pick a quarrel, ever ready to accept one, and will sometimes do so on the very slightest pretext."

Nick shrugged his shoulders but made no reply. Jenks, observing it, went on:

"There is a room at the top of the club-house which is fitted purposely for dueling. It has a sanded floor; it has padded walls with padded shutters to the windows and doors, so that in case of a duel with pistols they may be temporarily closed and the noise cannot be heard outside."

Nick smiled, and was exceedingly thoughtful for a moment. Then he said:

"How good a swordsman is Lloyd?"

"One of the best I ever saw," was the quick reply. "I hope you are not thinking of engaging him in a contest, Mr. Carter?"

"I was thinking of it, yes, as one way of winning his respect—possibly his confidence."

"He would surely kill you, or, at least, wound you seriously," said Jenks, with a troubled expression on his face.

"Perhaps not, Jenks. I am a fairly good swordsman myself. However, we won't anticipate."

"I hope, sir, that you will not bring matters to such a pass. I should be greatly troubled. I know Captain Lloyd's prowess with a sword, or rapier. It is said here in Paris that none can stand before him, not even the masters at arms."

"Don't worry, Jenks. I won't do anything rash. I was only thinking of something that I intended to do when I meet the captain, that might possibly anger him for the moment."

"Will you tell me what it is, sir?"

"Yes. There is a very good-looking young woman in New York City whose picture Lloyd purloined while he was there. She has empowered me to request the return of that picture. I had thought that possibly I might ask him to send it back to her."

"Great Scott, sir, if you should do that he would kill you in a minute."

"You don't think that I could put the request in a manner that would please instead of offend him?"

"I don't know. I'm sure."

"I would make it appear that the young woman made the request more because she wished to hear from him than because she wished the picture returned; and, honestly, I think that is the truth."

Jenks shook his head doubtfully.

"I don't know, sir; but, of course, you will do as you think best about it; and, whatever you may do while there, you may rely upon finding me always at your elbow."

CHAPTER VIII.

A WONDERFUL EXHIBITION OF SKILL.

It was shortly after four o'clock that afternoon when Nick Carter, accompanied by the faithful Jenks, entered the rooms of the Hurry Club.

It was rather a pretentious place, the detective discovered. An entire house, and a large one at that, was devoted to its uses; a corps of servants was in attendance; the rooms were gaudily decorated and furnished; everything seemed to be in perfect order, and the place was conducted on a system of discipline which was only accounted for when Nick met the proprietor of the place.

He was an expatriated Irishman who had spent years of his life in Paris. The army was written all over him, however, in his features, his erect carriage, notwithstanding his almost seventy years. He was as tall and straight and alert as a youth. He was known only as Monsieur.

"You are passing some time in Paris, seeing the sights, I suppose, Mr. Nichols?" he said to Nick when they met, and speaking with a rich as well as an indescribable brogue.

"It is not my first visit to the city," replied Nick truthfully.

"Ah! I am glad of that. Paris is not a good place for newcomers, but if you have been initiated there is nothing for me to warn you against."

"Thank you, no; I think not."

"I hope, sir, that you will make yourself at home here, whenever it pleases you to call upon us."

"Thank you again, Monsieur."

"Our club is of the free and easy order, up to a certain point. We desire that all shall feel at home and at liberty while here. It is true that there are some hotheads who come here—men who delight in picking quarrels on the slightest pretext. I mention that, sir, only because it is my duty so to do. If there is anything in which I can be of service to you, command me."

Nick thanked him again, and the proprietor was

turning aside to speak to others, when he paused abruptly and remarked:

"Here comes a gentleman whom you should know, Mr. Nichols. With your permission I will make you acquainted."

Without waiting for a reply he signaled across the room and a man rose and moved toward them—a man in whom, from the description he had, Nick instantly recognized Lloyd.

"Things are certainly working out beautifully," was Nick's thought, as Lloyd crossed the room toward them; and the next moment he was bowing in acknowledgment of the introduction made by Monsieur.

The proprietor then left them together, and for a time Nick and Lloyd stood side by side surveying the large room in a casual manner while they conversed; and suddenly Lloyd exclaimed:

"Jiminy Peters! There is good old Jenks!" and he pushed his hat to the back of his head, instantly replacing it, while with his left hand he flirted his handkerchief from his hip pocket, snapped it out straight, and then drew it across his face. If Nick had needed any additional proof that this was the man he sought, he had it then. But there was still another one. Lloyd was wearing in his tie a stick-pin that represented in ivory the head of a greyhound with a small ruby for the eye.

"Eh?" said Nick. "I beg your pardon, but what did you say?"

But Jenks had risen in response to a gesture of Lloyd's and was approaching them; and the detective added:

"Oh! Jenks! He is my valet, captain, although we have chosen to come here as companions and friends. I tell you this because I see you know him."

"Know him! I should say so. A finer chap doesn't exist, Mr. Nichols. I wish I were half as good as he is. Howdy, Jenks, old chap!" and he shook hands heartily with the man from Scotland Yard, adding instantly and in a lower tone: "But I forgot, didn't I? You are known here as Jenkins. Good! I won't forget again. Mr. Nichols tells me that you are in his service."

"Yes, sir; but Mr. Nichols treats me more as a friend than a servant."

"Good old Jenks! Well, you deserve it. I'll see you again later. I want a chat with you. Mr. Nichols, do you care for a game of any kind? Do you play?"

"Oh, yes; when occasion invites me; but don't you think it is a little early to begin? Wouldn't it be agreeable to you to indulge in that pastime somewhat later? I would like to see the club-house."

So under the escort of Lloyd the detective made a tour of the house, but it was not until they had visited every other room there and were about to descend the stairs again that the detective remarked:

"By the way, I have heard somewhere that there is a room here, set apart for the settlement of differences between gentlemen—a dueling-room, in fact. May I see that room, also?"

Lloyd looked at Nick for a moment without answering, and then he turned to the servant, who had been with them all the time, and directed him to fetch Monsieur.

"Strangers are not usually taken to that room, Mr. Nichols," he said, "and it is never opened save by Monsieur himself. But since you have heard of its existence I see no reason why it should be denied you. Ah! Monsieur, thank you for coming. Mr. Nichols has heard of our padded room and wishes to see it—if you have no objection."

"None whatever, if Mr. Nichols is discreet; and I have no doubt he is so."

"You will find me so, gentlemen," replied Nick, and the door was unlocked and they entered the room.

It was an apartment twenty-five feet square, and in every particular it bore out the description that Jenks had given of it. Around the padded walls were numberless swords, rapiers, foils with and without buttons, and there were many closed cases which Nick knew contained dueling-pistols. He opened one of them and lifted one of the weapons from its bed of velvet plush.

"A fine arm," he said, handling it; "but is not the distance rather short here, for a duel with pistols?"

For reply Monsieur crossed the room and opened a padded section of the wall disclosing a door, which he also opened, thus revealing a gallery which extended to the front of the building, and thus affording a shooting-range of sixty feet. In width the extension was approximately eight feet, Nick thought.

"Wouldn't the man at the larger end of the range have rather an advantage over his antagonist?" asked the detective critically.

"Possibly; the seconds toss for choice as to that," replied Monsieur grimly.

"Might one try his skill, Monsieur?" asked Nick. "I used to be rather a good shot, but I am, perhaps, out of practise at present."

"Certainly. With pleasure. What will you have for a target, Mr. Nichols?"

"The five-spot of spades, if you will send for one, and if you have a revolver."

Monsieur rang a bell and ordered what was needed; but when the servant was taking his departure Lloyd called to him to bring two five-spots; and he added when the servant had gone:

"I'll try my skill against yours, Mr. Nichols. What shall we say? For a bottle of wine?"

"Yes. A bottle of wine for you, captain; a cigar for me, if that is satisfactory."

"Quite so. Shall we toss for choice of shots?"

"Oh, I have no objections to shooting first, since I proposed it, captain."

The cards came, and, in the meantime, Monsieur had brought forth and loaded two Smith & Wesson target-revolvers of thirty-eight caliber. He gave one to each of the men after the servant had adjusted the two five-spots of spades at the end of the gallery. He had placed them according to the directions of Monsieur, side by side with about an inch of space between them, and Nick stepped to the end of the room.

"If you will permit me," he said, "I will use both pistols at once. I have a fancy to try an old trick that I used to do quite well. You don't object, gentlemen?"

"Not at all. Go ahead," said the captain.

Nick took both weapons in his hands and raised them so that he held them exactly parallel. Then, bang, bang, bang, bang, bang! Five simultaneously double reports rang out, and, as if by magic, the ten spots on the two cards disappeared, leaving holes in their places, and Nick smilingly gave the weapons into the hands of the gaping servant.

Monsieur and Lloyd gazed in amazement at each other, and then at Nick; and then Lloyd laughed aloud.

"I'll buy that cigar without attempting to beat you, Mr. Nichols," he said. "I confess at once that I couldn't do that. I could do it with my right hand, but not with my left, and certainly not in simultaneous shooting. You would be a dangerous adversary in a duel with pistols."

"I was a pupil of Ira Paine," replied the detective. "He was here in Paris and did some shooting, once. You will remember him, Monsieur."

"Perfectly. I don't think, Mr. Nichols, that you need anticipate any quarrels in this club—with pistols. You are a wonderful shot. Shall we go down-stairs?"

They descended then to the gambling-room, where by now there were several games in progress; and on the way down Lloyd asked Nick:

"Are you as expert a swordsman as marksman, Mr. Nichols?"

"Oh, I have fenced, captain," he replied indifferently. "Shall we have a bout with the foils, later on?"

"I should be delighted. While I am a fairly good marksman, my specialty is sword-play. I delight in it. By and by we will have a go at the foils, if you are willing."

"Surely."

When they entered the gambling-room all eyes were turned toward them. It was evident that the servant, who had attended upon them, had already carried the news of Nick's remarkable achievement to the persons assembled there. He found that he was the cynosure of all eyes, and there were whispered comments about him as he entered among them a second time.

Several came forward and wished to be introduced; and while Nick was shaking hands with these men he happened to glance across the room toward one who had remained seated, but who had his eyes intently fixed upon the detective's face.

As Nick glanced toward him the man arose and rapidly approached Lloyd, who had drawn a little to one side; and Nick Carter knew perfectly well what his whispered remark to the captain was as well as if he had heard it, for Nick had recognized the man, and he knew that he had himself been recognized—and he also had not the slightest doubt that this was the same man who had played the part of Croker, in the undoing of Daniel Coddington.

Without giving the two men an opportunity to exchange more than the one comment, he moved quickly past those who were in front of him, and addressing Lloyd in a low tone, but purposely loud enough so that the others who were near at hand might hear what he said, he remarked:

"By the way, captain, I think you are the gentleman for whom I have a message from a lady in New York. You were there recently, were you not?"

The captain's eyes narrowed to slits, and he replied coldly:

"Well, sir, what is the message, and who is it from?"

"The message, captain, is from a certain Miss Page, who is a manicurist. She wished me to ask you, if I happened to meet you over here, to be good enough to return the photograph that you took from her manicure-parlor, without her permission," was the cool reply, delivered by Nick Carter in a perfectly even tone of voice.

The reply was unexpected by all save Nick himself. It came in the instant. Lloyd's hand flew out, and had Nick not warded the blow with his arm he must have received it in the face.

"A duel!" exclaimed a bystander; and the others echoed:

"A duel!"

CHAPTER IX.

A DUEL WITH RAPIERS.

It was at that instant that Jenks rushed forward, greatly perturbed; but Nick turned coolly to Monsieur, who was close at hand, and said to him:

"Monsieur, will you be good enough to represent me? The arrangements may be made as soon as possible."

"Yes, sir," was the perfectly calm reply; "but if you challenge, your adversary will have the choice of weapons. He is not likely to select pistols."

"Let him select what he pleases. It is a matter of indifference to me."

Monsieur shrugged his shoulders and turned away. He conversed for a moment with Lloyd, and then with another person whom Nick had not met; then he returned to Nick, who was standing at one side conversing in low tones with Jenks, whose face had brightened visibly. Nick had assured him that he would not injure the captain seriously, and that he had perfect confidence in his own ability to remain uninjured; and for some inexplicable reason Jenks believed what he heard. He had already found that confidence in Nick Carter which comes to all who know him.

"Rapiers, and at once," said Monsieur laconically.

The detective bowed and moved toward the door at the same instant that Lloyd made the same move, and they met face to face directly in front of it.

"I know who you are now, and why you are here, Nick Carter," said Lloyd, in a low, fierce whisper. "I keep it to myself because you shall not come out of this affair alive. You are a wonderful shot, but so am I a wonderful swordsman. I shall kill you, if I can."

The detective smiled and replied:

"We will discuss that matter later on, captain. After you, sir," and he stepped back for Lloyd to precede him up the stairs.

There were perhaps twenty-five men in the establishment at the time, and they followed up the stairs to a man. Such was the customary thing in the Hurry Club whenever there was a duel on hand.

As soon as he was inside the dueling-room Nick threw aside his coat and waistcoat and outer shirt, leaving only a sleeveless gauze undershirt to cover his body; then he waited while Lloyd did the same, and until Monsieur stepped forward to inform him that all was in readiness. Things were arranged quickly in that club of duelists.

But Nick Carter had not a single misgiving as he took the position assigned to him, and bent the rapier, with its point against the floor, to see that it was all right, and to make himself familiar with its pliability.

Some of the readers of the Nick Carter histories have seen him fence before now; some of them will remember how once, in a castle in Normandy, he disarmed a fencing-master and so won his eternal regard and friendship.

To be a master in the use of all weapons was a part of the education that Nick Carter's father had given him in training him to become the greatest of all detectives, and Nick had spoken only the truth when he told Monsieur that it was a matter of indifference to him what weapons Lloyd might select for use at the present time. He was equally expert with all.

The word was given and the contest began, while the spectators looked on breathlessly.

Some were there who knew the skill of Captain Lloyd, and who believed that his opponent would last only a few minutes at the most.

For those there was a surprise in store, and it came quickly.

Almost at the outset the captain essayed to use a favorite trick of his en tierce, and he was surprised and dumfounded, as were many of the spectators, to see the trick neatly met and to discover that the captain had nearly received a wound himself, instead.

The ex-army officer played more carefully after that.

He had made the unpleasant discovery that his antagonist was, perhaps, as expert with the rapier as with the pistol.

He frowned slightly, but all the time Nick retained a pleasant smile on his face, as if the contest were merely a bout between them as a test of skill; such an one as they had talked about earlier in the evening.

Then began a spectacle of fence such as the witnesses had never seen before.

Many were the subdued exclamations which went up from all sides, for Captain Lloyd was really a past-

derful swordsman, with a wrist like steel, and a cool head as well.

He tried every trick known to the art of fencing, and many that are not generally known; also some that he supposed no one knew but himself; but each one was met and parried, with seemingly little effort on the part of his opponent—and twice the captain was nearly disarmed.

So nearly did he come to losing his weapon the last time, indeed, that he proceeded after that with much more caution than he had used before.

Also, he began to look troubled; he had come to the realization that he had found his master at fence—and it was something that he had never encountered before.

Save for the ring of the weapons as they clashed together, there was now absolute silence in the room.

Monsieur, who dearly loved a duel, stood like a statue observing every move, every stroke, every bit of foot-play. There was never a change of expression on his iron face, and only the bright sparkle of his remarkable eyes told how intensely he was enjoying the spectacle.

But such contests cannot last very long.

There must be a finish, and Lloyd had come to the realization that unless he did something quickly and did it well, he must be defeated.

It was then that he resorted to his pet trick—one which he had never known to fail. It was one that he had invented himself, and he never made use of it save only when he was convinced that nothing else would avail him.

Monsieur knew of the trick; he had seen Lloyd make use of it on several occasions; and now he recognized the preparation for it.

He took a step backward, breathing heavily in his suppressed excitement, and watched. He confidently expected to see the supposed Mr. Nichols go down under it, pierced, perhaps, in a vital spot, for already he had recognized the fact that Lloyd was fighting desperately, and meant to kill if he could.

Then it came.

It began with a feint and a half-step backward as if Lloyd had slipped, or somehow lost his footing, and the play was to recover quickly and strike down the opponent's weapon, instead of striking it aside or upward; then a straight lunge for the other man's throat.

He played it all perfectly to the huge and even that almost succeeded, for Nick did not know the trick; but Nick's weapon, as he recovered himself, moved so swiftly that to the eyes of the spectators it appeared to have taken the form of a corkscrew——

And with that instant Lloyd's rapier was torn from his grasp as if hands had seized it, and it was sent flying across the room, point first, where it pierced the shoulder of one of the spectators; and, strangely enough, that spectator happened to be the man who had passed as "Croker" in New York.

He uttered a cry of pain and staggered backward, while several of the men present rushed to his assistance.

As for Lloyd, he stood like one dazed, where he had been disarmed, his sword-hand, numb and for the moment useless, hanging limply at his side; and on that instant Nick stepped forward, close to him.

"I mean you no harm, nor even inconvenience, Captain Lloyd, and if you are wise you will keep what you know to yourself, for your own sake," he said, in a low tone; and then, raising his voice so that all could hear, he put out his hand and exclaimed:

"Captain Lloyd, shall we forget our differences?"

For just an instant, an almost imperceptible instant, Lloyd hesitated; then he took the proffered hand and replied:

"Thank you, Mr. Nichols. You are the first swordsman I have found who is my master. But we will try again, if you like."

"No, indeed. It was a foolish affair, anyhow. I should have delivered my message with more diplomacy. I will tell you now, in the presence of these gentlemen, that I believe the only reason why the message was sent was because the lady would be pleased to hear from you. She was under the impression that you had given her a name not your own, which I know is not so. Will that explanation suffice?"

"Certainly."

They resumed their clothing, and when that was done, discovered that they were alone in the room save for Jenks, who stood near them, and the wounded man over whom Monsieur, and another who possessed some surgical skill, were bending. Nick approached them.

"I am very sorry for the accident which resulted so unpleasantly for you, Mr.——" He paused inquiringly, and Lloyd quickly interpolated:

"Mr. Pierce, Mr. Nichols." And thus he informed Nick of his victim's name.

"I am very sorry, Mr. Pierce, that you were injured," Nick continued. "I trust, gentlemen, that it is not serious."

"Oh, no," replied Monsieur, with a shrug. "He will be laid up for a week or so, I suppose, and he'll be a bit stiff in his muscles for a while, but beyond that—nothing. And"—Monsieur chuckled without smiling—"he will always be able to assert boldly that he has been wounded in a duel. He shall have a room on this floor until he is well again."

Nick Carter and Lloyd descended the stairs together with Jenks closely behind them. At the bottom Nick paused and said:

"Captain Lloyd, will you ride with Jenks and me to my hotel, and do me the favor of a short conversation with me there?"

"Yes, if I am assured that——"

"Pardon me, captain; you already have that assurance. What I said to you immediately after the duel was sincere."

"Very well, sir. I will accompany you."

At the hotel, an hour later, in the parlor of Nick Carter's suite, the two men seated themselves facing each other, and, by Nick's request, Jenks remained with them.

"Captain," said the detective, then, "the story of Coddington is a closed incident. I do not intend to revive it again, save as a matter of reference. Coddington is now in Sing Sing prison serving out his term. Jenks, here, knows the whole story, for I have told it to him, so you need not hesitate to talk in his presence. You have done nothing for which I could have you arrested on this side of the ocean; nothing that is extraditable."

"Well, then, what is it that you want of me?" asked the captain, with some haughtiness in his manner.

"I will tell you that quite bluntly. I want to find your principal, and I want you to assist me to do so."

"My—principal?"

"Yes. The one who arranged that entire scheme. The one who supplied the capital to carry it off. The man of a million or more, who lives in the life-blood of others—yours as well as poor Coddington's. Will you tell me who he is?"

"No."

"Think for a moment, captain. Think of poor Coddington, and what he is daily suffering."

"I do think of him, all the time. I'd give a good deal if I could undo that thing. But that would not excuse me for betraying a man who has trusted me."

"Coddington trusted you, and you betrayed him. Have you forgotten that, captain?"

"Wait, Carter, wait. Let me think."

CHAPTER X.

NICK CARTER SPEAKS HIS MIND.

"That was part of the game," said Lloyd, with a shallow, uneasy smile.

"Aye, but it was a game in which the other man had no chance. It was infinitely worse than cheating at cards, Lloyd, because you were playing against that poor fellow's liberty; you were playing against his family; against that boy, now only a few years old, who must grow to manhood with the stigma upon him that his father has been a convict. Did you realize all that when you started in to play your game?"

"No; before Heaven I did not." Lloyd had flushed deeply when Nick mentioned the cards, but he paid no further heed than that to the remark.

"But you realized it later on," insisted the detective.

"Yes; but it was too late then to draw back. I was in too deeply."

"Do you want to see other innocent young men go the same road that Coddington has traveled because of you?" asked Nick.

"'No! no! no!"

"Others are being led that way, Lloyd. Others were before him, and others will follow in precisely his footsteps unless something is done to stop the activities of that fiend who directs it all. Who is he?"

"I cannot tell you."

"You know, don't you?"

"Yes."

"Then tell me who he is."

"No; I cannot do it."

"Give me an idea about him that will afford some clue."

"No; not even that."

"Does he live in New York?"

"Yes; I'll tell you that much."

"He goes into society, too, doesn't he?"

"I will tell you no more about him, Mr. Carter. I cannot. You will say that it is a distorted idea of honor, and, perhaps, it is, but I cannot—I will not betray him to you. I will continue to refuse to aid you in this matter as long as there is breath left in my body; but I will tell you this, if it will be any comfort to you: I shall never do again what I did in the case of young Coddington."

"That is at least something—if you mean it."

"I do mean it; every word of it. Coddington liked me, and I liked him. I'd—I'd almost change places with him if that would do him any good. Almost; I

don't know that I would, quite. I might as well be truthful about it."

"Jenks," said Nick, turning to him, "will you add your persuasions to mine? Possibly the captain will do more for his father's old gamekeeper than for me. Try."

"Don't say a word, Jenks," interrupted Lloyd hastily. "It would do no good. I will not betray the man. I will not add a word to what I have already said. I have told you that he lives in New York, and that is all I will say."

"You would not like to have this affair get out—become public property, would you, captain?" asked the detective coldly.

"Are you threatening me, Mr. Carter?" was the equally cool reply.

"Possibly."

"You are offering me blackmail."

"No; I am offering you immunity from public exposure on condition that you reveal to me the name and identity, as well as the locality, of the man who was your principal in the Coddington affair."

"Well, I'll see you hanged first. That is blunt enough, isn't it?"

"Yes. I'll be equally so. I will find that man, Lloyd, and I'll bring him to justice. When I have done so I will get a complete confession from him which will contain all the particulars about your connection with the Coddington affair; and I will include the story of Coddington, telling how you accepted his hospitality, dined with him, slept at his house, and how you piloted him to Sing Sing prison."

Nick left his chair and went to the door of the room which he opened.

"Chester Lloyd," he said, with bitter emphasis, "you began your present career by cheating at cards, and now you have become a common swindler. That you are not a pickpocket as well is only because you have not the talent. You are a swindler and a scoundrel—and you are what is infinitely worse, a despicable coward. I wonder that you weren't drummed out of the army for cowardice before you had a chance to steal from your brother officers. Sit where you are! If you make a move in my direction I will carry you down the stairs and throw you head first into the street, and then tell the hotel people exactly why I did it. And I can do it."

The man was white with rage and trembling with alarm.

He still had much of his old pride left, and nobody had ever before that moment dared to tell him exactly what he was.

He had never had it brought home to him in just that manner before. The iron was in him, and it hurt.

"I offer you a chance to atone, in part, for what you have done," Nick continued, "and like the coward you are, you refuse it. Do you still refuse?"

Sullen silence was the reply.

"Very well. Get out of this room, you cur! Get out, I say. To-night I shall tell what I know about you to the chief of the Paris police. You will be a marked man, after that, not only in Paris, but in all Europe and in your own country as well. Your picture will be in all the rogues galleries of Europe, for I can draw it from memory just as faithfully as a camera would make it. There won't be any road left open to you, from now on, save that of a common felon, and your shift will be short at that thing, for you haven't the ability or the temperament to stand it very long. And Dan Sheldon, alias Pierce, alias Croker, shall fare the same. Now go!"

"At least I'll find a way to get even with you for this scene, Nick Carter."

Nick laughed in his face.

"Others, much more to be feared than you, have said that same thing to me," he said. "For the most part they are in prison now—or dead. And I'll get you yet, my swindler of his friends, cheater at cards, common thief, and embryo pickpocket. I'll get your principal, too."

Lloyd moved toward the door.

"I think your millionaire crook is in Paris at this moment," Nick added, as Lloyd was passing through it. "I have good reason to think so. If he is, I will find him. He may live in New York, but he is not in New York now. Get out, you cheat!"

The detective took a step forward and shut the door with a bang, leaving Lloyd outside; but as he turned back into the room he said rapidly to Jenks:

"Follow him, Jenks! Follow him quickly. Say whatever you please to him, only manage to detain him on the front steps for three minutes. Just three. Then come back here to this room and wait for me. I am sorry for your sake that I had to treat him so badly, but it had to be done in order to force him to do what I want him to do this night. Go now. Detain him just three minutes. That is all I ask."

He watched Jenks outside the door; but the instant the man was gone he hurried into his bedroom, tore open his suit-case, scattered things out of it, and

worked with all the rapidity he was master of, watching the clock on the mantel as he did so.

In just two minutes and a half he was ready, and with one hasty glance behind him, he also passed out at the door and hurried along the corridor.

But if you had seen him you would not have known that he was Nick Carter, or Mr. Nichols, or any other person you had ever met before that time.

He had transformed himself in that short time to a typical boulevardier—a Parisian dandy, whose occupation in life consists of sitting in front of cafés, ogling women, and in doing all other objectionable things while remaining well dressed, although usually rather superlatively so.

The make-up was perfect, although it had been accomplished in two and one-half minutes; but then, the detective had expected to be obliged to use it, and he, therefore, had everything in readiness; only the adjustment, and a change of outer clothing had been necesssary.

At the expiration of the three minutes he had allotted, Nick stepped out upon the pavement in front of the hotel and stood there twirling his cane and puffing a cigarette—an article he despised but which was necessary to his make-up.

At a short distance away, near the curb, Lloyd and Jenks were engaged in a close and earnest conversation, and the detective smiled as he watched them.

"The captain is trying to influence Jenks against me," thought the detective, "but if I am any judge of character, he won't succeed."

As a matter of fact, Nick did not appreciate what good work Jenks was doing for him at that moment. The astute Scotland Yard man had correctly guessed why the detective sent him out after Lloyd as he did, and just at that moment he was saying:

"Believe me, captain, I know whereof I speak. There is no detective in the world like that man yonder. The proof of it is that he came straight to you. I did not even know what his mission was until this evening. And now, sir, if you will take a bit of advice from old Jenks you will manage to get word to your friend somehow that Nick Carter is on his trail. It would be better to see him, of course, for then you could tell him all about it; but as you say he is not in Paris—why, manage somehow to get word to him. Carter will do all that he has threatened if he catches that man on this side of the water. He will expose you in such a way that you will never recover from it. For your own sake, sir, see him if you can. If Carter is in his room, when I return there I will find a way to detain him so you will not be followed—and I must get back at once. Good night."

Jenks darted away quickly, leaving Lloyd standing there at the curb; and the latter, after one hasty glance around him, in which he saw only the boulevardier and a few others like him, he, too, started away at a rapid walk.

A hansom cab was near at hand, and Nick instantly entered it. To the driver he said:

"Keep that man in sight, no matter where he goes. If you succeed you get twenty-five francs extra pay; if you fail you don't get a sou extra. Can you earn the money?"

This was said in French, of course, and the man instantly replied that he could.

There had been no time for Nick to leave any message for Jenks, but he rightly conjectured that the shrewd fellow would understand; and we know that he did so.

Fortunately for Nick Carter's plans, Lloyd preferred to walk; possibly he wished to wear away some of the appearances of the excitement under which he had been laboring.

But he walked rapidly and well, and he had a considerable distance to go.

His destination proved later on to be in that fashionable section of the Faubourg St. Germaine, and it was found at a pretentious mansion on that thoroughfare, where only a rich man could afford to reside.

It was a house, Nick decided when he saw it, that might have been rented for the season, fully furnished and equipped with servants, and the exact locality of it is not given for the reason that it would be offensive to the owner of the place.

But Lloyd passed through the open gateway in the iron fence with an assurance that proclaimed it to be not his first visit there, and presently he ascended the steps and was admitted.

Nick was about to descend from the cab when he saw Lloyd approaching the street again, and he quickly resumed his seat.

"Follow him," he told his driver, "and keep him in sight at whatever cost."

CHAPTER XI.

THE PLOT TO KILL.

The time was yet early in the evening; that is, early for Paris. The theaters and operas were not out, and it was to one of the former that Lloyd now directed his steps.

"Good!" exclaimed the detective when he saw the captain enter one of them; and he sprang from the cab telling the driver to wait for him, and indicating where he should stand so that there might be no difficulty in finding him quickly when wanted. Then he hastened into the theater after Lloyd.

The play was at about the middle of the last act, but it was an absorbing one and nobody had started to leave; therefore, Nick had no difficulty, as soon as he entered the place, in discerning Lloyd, who was making his way around toward one of the boxes.

"This is much better than the house," he thought to himself. "I could not have gotten inside, there, and it might have taken several days before I spotted my man, whereas now—well, I will know who he is before long."

There was always the chance that the man whom Lloyd had gone to the theater to see might not be the real one Nick was after; but more than likely he would be; and, at all events, he would be one who was in close touch with the chief of swindlers.

It happened to be one of the proscenium boxes which Lloyd entered, and, therefore, Nick could obtain a fairly good view of it from the rear of the house.

He saw Lloyd enter it, saw a man who was seated in front between two women, start and half-turn; saw that man make an impatient motion as if he were not at all pleased by the interruption, or by the presence of the other; saw Lloyd step forward, bend over, and whisper something in the ear of the other man; saw the latter shake his head impatiently; saw Lloyd repeat his former act with still more insistence, and then saw the man at the front of the box rise and retreat to the rear of it, out of sight from the audience.

And all the time Nick Carter had been staring in utter amazement. He was more astonished, and he would have admitted it, than he had ever been before in all his life.

For he knew the man who had been seated at the front of the box. The man to whom Lloyd had spoken, when he entered it, was perfectly well known to the detective—that is, by sight.

Nick Carter knew the man by sight as well as he would have known any public character of the United States whom he might have seen in a box at the theater; and in that moment he recalled some words of the commissioner when they had talked over the case together.

The commissioner had said: "I haven't any doubt that he poses as a member of good society; that he owns his automobiles and a private yacht; that he rides to hounds," and more to the same effect. And here was the patent truth of all those statements.

To Nick Carter's mind was also apparent the satisfying self-assurance that there could be no mistake in that this was the master criminal; that this was the millionaire swindler; that this man was the one who was really guilty of Coddington's crime; that here, seated in a box at the theater in Paris, was the plotter, the schemer, the undoer of others, the black beast who was responsible for the downfall of so many young man, employed by banks, who have been led astray step by step until after one last big haul of which they never derived the benefit, they were arrested and forced to pay the penalties for the crimes of others.

And yet, now that Nick stopped to consider it for a moment, he was not so greatly surprised as he might have been.

He could, when he tried, recall many an unenviable chapter in the life of that man. He knew of more than one dark and mysterious deed that had been attributed to him, for which there had never been found any truth.

"So," he mused to himself, while he still watched the box for more action there, "the man I seek is Mr. Charles Percy Blaisdell. Percy Blaisdell, artist, architect, first-nighter, society swell, horse-owner, country club pet. Percy Blaisdell, art critic, contributor to the fairs of the élite. Percy Blaisdell, reputed to be many times a millionaire, though I think that part of it is largely a fake since he steals to keep going; but he undoubtedly keeps a goodly amount of ready capital near at hand. Percy Blaisdell, who is quoted as an authority in the society and the financial columns of the papers alike."

He ceased at that point, for he saw Lloyd and Blaisdell leave the box together and walk slowly along the side aisle toward the rear of the theater, and he changed his own position in order to pass around where he would meet them face to face.

The detective had perfect confidence in his own disguise. He was not afraid that he would be recognized by either of the men.

He stood at the end of the aisle near the rear row of seats as they approached him, and they came to a stop, too, not many feet away, conversing in low tones—and in English. Nick took a few steps nearer to them, so he could hear what was said, although in appearance he was craning his neck in an effort to observe everything that was passing on the stage.

It was evident that they did not observe him, for

they continued their conversation without paying the slightest attention to the detective.

"What you say doesn't make any difference in the fact, Lloyd," Blaisdell was saying. "You have made an insufferable fool of yourself. Oh, you needn't flush up and show that nasty temper of yours, because it doesn't affect me in the slightest degree. If only you are positive that Carter hasn't followed you here—that's all!"

"I'm positive of that, all right, Blaisdell."

"Well, get out of here as quickly as you can. We must not run the chance now of being seen together. I'll send word to you to-morrow in the usual way what is to be done."

"At the club?"

"Yes."

"I expect even that place will soon be too hot to hold me."

"It won't if you do what I have told you to do. Kill him, man! You had your chance to-night in the duel, and you lost it."

"The fellow fences like a fiend."

"He does everything like that. But kill him. Lure him out of the hotel this very night. Send him a message that you have changed your mind and that you'll tell all you know. Then have some of your Paris Apaches ready at hand to do him up. It is the only way. Send for him to go to you. He'll go, all right. I know him."

"But if I hire assassins I need more money than I have got on me at the moment."

"Oh, that's easy. Here! There are ten thousand francs; two thousand dollars. That ought to be enough."

"Yes; that will do it."

"Now, will you do what I say?"

"Yes. At once. This very night. I'll find the men I want, and I'll send to the hotel after him within an hour."

"Good. If you do for him, Lloyd—if you succeed in getting him out of the way for good and all I'll cheerfully add a hundred thousand francs to that ten, and I won't count it against you in the settlement, either."

"I'll do it. He said enough to me to-night to make me want to do it, anyhow."

"Good again. Now slip out of here. The curtain is about to drop, and I must return to the box."

"Will you send for me in the morning?"

"I'll send you some sort of a message. I'll let you know what to do and where to meet me to-morrow. Good night."

Blaisdell turned and hurried away, and Nick sauntered out of the theater directly behind Lloyd, who walked slowly till he was outside, but who then sprang into a fiacre after giving an address which Nick overheard and which he knew to be in the vicinity of the abatoires—the slaughter-houses of Paris; a district infested by the worst characters in the whole city.

The detective did not follow him; he did not consider it necessary, because he knew that he would hear from him again within an hour or two; what he did do was to leap into his own cab.

"Drive to my hotel as fast as you can go," he ordered the driver. "When we arrive there, wait for me again."

At the hotel he ran up the stairs to his own rooms and found Jenks seated there awaiting him.

"Jenks," he said, "are you known at the headquarters of police, here?"

"Yes, sir."

"To the night chief?"

"Yes, sir."

"Good. So am I. I want you to get there as quickly as you can. Tell the night chief that you are in my employ. He is a good friend of mine. Tell him that Captain Chester Lloyd, of the Hurry Club, has plotted to have me murdered to-night by some Apaches he has engaged to do the work. Tell him that I don't yet know where it is to happen, but that Lloyd is to send for me presently, and that as soon as I find out the address I will have it telephoned to him; the place and the time for the attack. It will doubtless be made while I am talking with Lloyd—for I shall keep the appointment in order that Lloyd and his hirelings may be captured red-handed. Tell him to send enough good men to round up half a dozen toughs, and if he will go himself I will appreciate it. Tell him to call our old signal when he approaches. I will know then that everything is in readiness. And you, Jenks——"

"Yes, sir."

"Stay there at headquarters with the chief until my telephone-message arrives. And, one more thing."

"Very good, sir."

"Ask the chief to send one of his best 'shadows' quickly to the front of the house in the Faubourg St. Germaine where Mr. Percy Blaisdell is living. I want Blaisdell shadowed, and I want to know everything he is attempting to do. I suspect he is leaving the city to-night or in the early morning. If so he must be followed, and I want a report of it. The 'shadow' should take a second man with him to bring back a report if Blaisdell starts. Get all that down, Jenks?"

"Yes, sir."

"Then go. Remember that my life probably depends

upon your carrying out my orders precisely as I have given them."

"Very good, sir."

Half an hour later, or to be exact, at midnight, a messenger brought a note from Lloyd to the detective. In it the ex-officer had written in part:

"I have thought better of my refusal about the Coddington affair. If you will come to me at the address below—21 Rue de Abatoire Petite—between one and two o'clock this night, I will give you the name you want and all the other particulars. After that I shall go to Algiers and join the French army down there. It is about the only thing left for me to do. Just tell this messenger what time you will meet me. That will be sufficient answer. I will understand."

How shallow it was!

Even if the detective had not been forewarned, he would have seen through the plot at once; but it only went to show how inexperienced Lloyd really was in the path of crime he had adopted.

"Tell the gentleman who sent this note to me that the hour will be half-past one," he said. Then he dismissed him and went to the telephone where he soon had the chief himself on the wire.

At one o'clock he left the hotel to keep the appointment.

CHAPTER XII.

A DRAMATIC CLIMAX.

Nick Carter drove in his cab straight to the door of 21 Rue de Abatoire Petite and got down from it directly in front of the door. He had told the chief over the phone that he would do that; and as he got down he heard the signal which told him that his friends had already arrived on the scene, and that at least there would be no miss in that part of the plan.

As he approached the door, it opened and Lloyd appeared.

"Send your cab away," he demanded. "When we have finished our interview I will go with you to get another."

As if he had no thought of treachery, Nick complied; but he had already given cabby his instructions, and the fellow merely drove around a near corner and stopped there, waiting. Then Nick, very much on the alert, followed Lloyd into the house.

He did not expect an immediate attack. He knew the French character too well for that. The hired assassins would want to look him over a bit, first. They would want to hear his voice and to know what sort of a man it was they were to kill.

Nick was led into a room at the rear of the house that had two other doors in addition to the one they made use of; there he was told to be seated; but instead of complying with that request he walked to one corner of the room where he was out of range from any of the doors and stood there with his back against the wall and his hands in his pockets. He knew that the police officers would follow him into the house at once, and it was now his desire to bring about the climax as soon as possible.

"Why don't you sit down?" demanded Lloyd.

"Because I prefer to stand, and because I don't care to be seated in such company as you afford."

Lloyd uttered an oath; then, before Nick realized what he was doing, the man whipped out a pistol, and, raising it quickly, fired pointblank at him.

But his marksmanship for once at least failed him. Either he was excited or he was nervous; anyway, the bullet intended for Nick Carter's brain buried itself in the wall close beside his head.

But the shot was a signal for the general attack—as it was also a signal for the rescue.

The two other doors already referred to were thrown open simultaneously, and men rushed through them into the room; but even as they did so, that other door, by which the detective had been taken into the room, was also burst open, and other men appeared, in front of them no less a person than the chief himself.

Two of the Apaches had already leaped toward Nick, but, although they had their bludgeons raised to strike, neither of them fell, for Nick Carter, with two of his wonderfully executed snap shots, put a bullet through the hand of each of the men; and then, in much less time than it takes to tell of it, the thing was over.

Lloyd, when he found that he was surprised, and realized that he had been taken in the act of attempting to commit murder, tried to turn his weapon against himself; but the chief knocked it from his hand, and he was also made a prisoner.

"They cannot guillotine me for this, Nick Carter," he shouted at the detective. "Some day I'll get out of it, and I won't forget my debt to you when that time comes."

Nick made him no reply, and within a few moments the procession was led away.

At headquarters—it is called the prefecture in Paris—Nick found the messenger from the "shadow" awaiting him. He brought this message:

"Left for Calais to catch early boat. You will find another message from me with chief of guard at Calais; another with telegraph-operator at Dover; after that can't say now. B."

"Chief," said the detective, turning to the official, "I must go at once. Do what you please with these fellows, only don't detain me now as a witness."

"I can't do much without your testimony. You know that," said the chief.

"Yes. Do what you can with them, and let it go at that. I'll return if I can, but I hardly think so. In the meantime, I am greatly obliged to you. I will ask you to take charge of my baggage at the hotel for me, and to pay my bill there. I want to catch that first train; the one that Blaisdell takes out of the city."

"You have just fifteen minutes to do it, Nick. Run!" exclaimed the chief, looking at his watch; and in another moment Nick and Jenks were being whirled through the streets of Paris with a policeman on the box to account for the breaking of the speed laws; and Nick Carter caught the train, you may be sure of that, although he had less than ten seconds to spare when he boarded it.

He had no difficulty in finding the "shadow" when they arrived at Calais, and, having paid him liberally and still relying upon the disguise he wore to conceal his identity, he boarded the boat, having satisfied himself that Blaisdell with the two women were already upon it.

"If only the swindler has determined to return to New York," was the detective's hope and thought; and he had, as presently appeared.

The millionaire swindler went from Dover to London where he remained until the following afternoon, and then he took a train for Liverpool and sailed the following day for New York; but with Nick Carter and Jenks as passengers on the same steamer.

Our two friends crossed the ocean on that trip second class, for Nick preferred to keep entirely out of Blaisdell's way until they were in New York City, and that he succeeded in doing, still maintaining his disguise as a boulevardier.

He arrived in New York in the same disguise, and, after directing Jenks to follow Blaisdell wherever he might go, he went himself to police headquarters to find the commissioner.

"I have found our man," he said, after he had made himself known. "He is here in New York. We just arrived on the same steamer."

"Who is he?" demanded the commissioner.

"You would never guess in a thousand years, commissioner."

"Probably not. Who is he?"

"Percy Blaisdell."

"Impossible."

"But true, commissioner. And now the question arises, what can we do with him?"

"I am afraid there isn't much that we can do."

"That is what I have been thinking. But I have also thought out a plan which I think will eventually bring the man where we want him."

"What is it, Nick?"

"Send two of your men up to his house after him. Have him arrested as a suspicious person and brought here at once. Take him up-stairs and have his picture added to your collection. Call in the reporters, and let them be present at the interview and at the picture taking, and let me do the talking."

"By Jove, Nick, I think that is about as good, or, better even, than sending him to prison at the present time."

"That isn't all, commissioner. The fact that he is discovered for what he is will drive him into a corner where he will snarl like a wildcat. That will eventuate in his presently overstepping his caution, and before we are much older he will do something which will put him behind the bars. I propose to keep after him till I get him there, for Coddington's sake if for no other reason. There isn't a thing, in the eyes of the law, for which we can send him up now. But there will be something later, and I won't lose sight of him."

It was two hours later when Percy Blaisdell, white with indignant rage, was ushered none too gently into the presence of the commissioner and Nick Carter; and directly after him came Jenks, who was carrying out his orders of not losing sight of the man.

Nick, by arrangement, touched a button near him several times, and a moment later the door opened a second time and several newspaper reporters entered the room and arranged themselves about as best suited their convenience. They had been promised a dainty morsel of news, and now they were to get it.

The detective had removed every trace of his recent disguise, and now he stepped forward and stood in front of Blaisdell, smiling scornfully upon him.

"Blaisdell," he said, "you have been arrested as a suspicious person and brought here in order that these gentlemen of the newspapers may hear exactly who and what you are. You are a swindler, a thief, a confidence man, everything that is bad. One week ago yesterday you induced one of your gang to attempt to murder me, and to hire assassins to assist him. The chief of the Paris police has full proof of that, and I myself heard your conversation with Captain Chester Lloyd, who was known in this country as Lloyd Churchill, which name the gentlemen present will remember as the man who did most in the ruin of Coddington." Then he told them the whole of Coddington's story; he told of his experiences in Paris and of finding "Croker" there with Lloyd, and throughout it all guilt shone so plainly on the face of Blaisdell that there was no use in his attempting to deny anything that was said.

At the close of his arraignment, he added:

"Blaisdell, you are held here as a suspicious person, according to the will of the commissioner. You are known to be a swindler. You will now have your picture taken for the gallery, after which you will sleep at least one night in a cell. One thing more: I shall consult lawyers to see if there is any way of getting at your stolen money. If there is, you will lose it, and if I have any influence, young Coddington shall be liberated as soon as I can convince the governor of the State that you are the guilty man more than he. Take him away, officer, and get his picture!

"Commissioner, I think my work for the present is done. But I will not forget what I have promised you. I will keep my eye on that scoundrel, and sooner or later I'll put him where Coddington is now."

THE END.

The next number, 626, will be "The Money Schemers; or, Nick Carter After the Confidence King."

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"FOUND DROWNED."

"Mr. Herron," said my old chief, "as you are doubtless aware, hardly a morning passes without the notice of 'Found Drowned' is in one or another of the daily papers, and, notwithstanding the fact that the coroner stamps them all as 'suicides,' I begin to doubt his judgment. The evening papers announce that another person has been 'Found Drowned.'"

"Suicides, eh? Oh, yes, they're plenty; or, if not all suicides, perhaps something else," I answered.

"Too true," he returned; "but would it not be well to trace the mystery of these floating bodies, so as to know the truth, rather than to allow a pig-headed coroner to class them all as self-slain? I also notice that many of the victims are branded 'unknown,' indicating them to be strangers to the city—strangers who come here to drown themselves, eh?"—and he laughed. "No, Herron. The fact probably is, that one-half of these unknown dead are thrown into the river, even if the other half do jump in."

"I think you are right," I replied.

"Then you believe," said the chief, "that many of these men—for I have noticed that they are mostly all men—have been murdered, and their bodies disposed of in this manner?"

"That is just what I do think—killed in some way that leaves no sign—poisoned or suffocated, and then thrown into the river."

The result of that interview was that I received a special commission to ferret out, if possible, the source or sources whence came these unknown dead.

The task set before me was a difficult one, yet, as it showed the confidence my superior placed in my ability, I accepted it with a feeling of pride, and a determination that, if it lay in man's power to do so, I would accomplish it.

Two days later the papers announced another mysterious death.

The article was headed:

"WAS IT SUICIDE OR MURDER?"

It ran as follows:

"The morning the dead body of Bruce Cloyd, a well-known gambler, was discovered Room No. 5, in the C—— Hotel, North Street, was found dead in his bed on the third floor of the house. He had retired late in a pretty sober condition and apparently in excellent health. His window was secured, and his door was not only locked, but bolted. When he was searched by the coroner, no trace was found upon him, in his bed, or in his clothing, of a roll of banknotes that he was known to have had the day before, but it is naturally supposed that he had lost it in a run of bad luck at some gaming-table before going to his room. The police are investigating, and it is hoped that the mystery will be fully cleared up before the coroner's jury, which will assemble to-morrow to decide as to the real cause or causes of Bruce Cloyd's death."

Something in the article prompted me to visit the locality—which was in an unfashionable and rather rough part of the city—to satisfy myself, beyond the possibility of the slightest doubt, upon a vague suspicion which the perusal of the article had awakened in my mind.

Accordingly, at nine o'clock that night, I went to the suspected house, disguised as a boyish-looking person, with silky black curls falling over my neck, and my face was so artistically painted that the ravages of disease could be plainly traced.

"What shall it be, my friends?" said I, as I stepped up to the bar connected with the hotel. "Life's too short not to make it merry when we can, and, as I'm thrown into your company for to-night, and just to show your good-will toward a stranger, order your drinks."

The heart of the crowd was touched, and I was taken into general confidence when they saw what a generous "mooner" I tossed off on the heels of a distressing cough which followed my speech.

"My friends," said I, after a pause, "I've been a wild sort of a fellow in my time, but I've weakened, and have set out to undo the wrong I've done to a certain party, and have got together what coin I can raise, and am trailing him up to give back the money. Of course, it ain't the half of what I took, but I had a streak of luck at cards over at Squire's that swelled the sum considerable."

There was an inspiration in my last words which checked the feeling of constraint which might have followed upon my confession.

"Let's have a little game, then, just to help you on your way," suggested one of the men.

Of course I was willing.

From the time I entered the room and now, as I sat down at the gaming-table, that racking cough, which I flatter myself I imitated very cleverly, had run its distressing accompaniment, and I made it noticeable that when I put my handkerchief to my lips it came away with a crimson stain—the stains, however, were paint.

"Yes," said I carelessly, answering the look I detected in the surrounding faces, "I'm booked for the next world."

Finally the game began, and, for a while, I won, for it was a pure chance game, where the rascal who played against me could bring good luck or ill to his opponent, as he might wish; but as the night advanced, and the liquor which I appeared to drink, but did not, apparently rose to my head, I saw that my luck had turned, until at eleven o'clock I had lost a considerable amount.

When this point was reached, I refused to play more, although I announced I had twice the sum I had lost yet remaining, and swore that I would go to my bed and try it again when blessed with better luck.

Presently a servant appeared who was to show me to my room.

"Take the gentleman to Room No. 5," said the man I had played against. "He'll sleep sound there, and there's a good lock on the door, so that he will feel safe when once inside. Good night," he continued to me, with a grin. "You'll feel better in the morning."

Growling a reply, I followed my guide, a villainous-look-

ing negro, to the third floor, and through a long hall to a room at the end of the house.

He flung the door open and placed a candle on the table.

"Night, massa," said the darky, turning to go. "Hope you will sleep soun'. Mos' gemmen do in this room."

"Who spoke to you, you black rascal?" said I, with simulated anger. "Get out. I won't sleep till I have had a smoke, sound or not."

And I produced a cigar and lit it at the candle.

The darky vanished.

I closed and bolted the door behind him.

"Now to examine my apartment," thought I.

I began at once to do so.

It was a rather small room, with two windows and a cupboard.

The cupboard had, evidently, at one time afforded a way for ingress and egress by means of a door communicating with a narrow back stairway, but now that was slightly fastened by a few nails driven through its edges into a frame.

I pulled out several of the nails, how it is needless to state.

I observed that there were cobwebs in such positions as to show conclusively that the door could not have been opened for a long time.

And the door between the cupboard and the room had a stout lock upon it, with a key in the lock that worked perfectly.

Clearly an occupant of the room could have no fear whatever of an attack from that side.

Nevertheless, I explored that stairway beyond the cupboard, and there I discovered that it was boxed in and closed by another door that was also loosely nailed.

I readily drew the nails, opened the door, and went down more stairs.

At the foot there was another door, also hastily nailed, which, upon being opened, revealed a small iron balcony.

The door I had first opened I set down as a "blind lead," and made further investigations.

I took up the carpet of the room—the cupboard had none—and searched the floor and sounded the walls for a trap-door, but there was none.

Suddenly I began to be aware of a strange odor floating in the air, and now, as I stood by the open window, I could not at first determine whether it originated within the room or came from without.

But little by little it grew stronger, and then, as I gazed into the semidarkness, I saw wavering wreaths of smoke arising to float in and out and drift at last over my head through the window.

Was the house on fire?

A sudden fear shot through me, and I half-raised myself to shout from the window, when, with a more dense puff of smoke, there came a suffocating fume, and at that very instant, even as I heard the sudden batter and crash of my men, whom I had stationed outside before entering the den—though I didn't say so before—the truth shot through me.

They were trying to poison me—to suffocate me with the deadly fumes of charcoal blown into the room by some secret means.

There is little else to relate.

The police captured the house and all its inmates, and from one who turned State's evidence learned the story of the den.

It was owned by an Italian, who, well acquainted with this mode of death, had adopted it as a quiet and certain method of ridding himself of customers who either won or lost too much.

The Italian occupied a room directly above No. 5, and he had made a peep-hole in the ceiling of the latter, through which, by removing a loose board in his uncarpeted floor, he could see the inmates of the room beneath and observe their actions according to circumstances as observed.

Next, he had arranged a one-and-a-half-inch tube, or hose, in the wall behind the laths and plaster, its lower end fitted to a knot-hole in No. 5, and its upper end, when not in use, concealed under the floor of his room.

This tube was about ten feet long.

When in use its upper end was connected with a small and ingeniously constructed charcoal-furnace, which would when a fire was started in it and the connection made, pour a steady flow of deadly carbonic acid gas down the tube and into the room beneath.

The gas, being heavier than the air, would descend like water, and gradually fill the death-chamber below, so that a person slumbering there would never awake again, if the Italian so willed.

The murder having been done, how was the Italian to reap the fruits of his crime?

That was easy.

The boxing of that narrow, disused stairway formed one side of his room, and he had so fixed two of the boards that he could at will put them aside and pass out upon the steps.

At the top of that apparently firmly nailed cupboard door there was cunningly contrived a concealed spring.

Now, by pressing that spring on the outside, that door, with its frame, could be made to swing back upon hidden hinges on the side opposite the ostensible lock, the frame being actually double.

When his victim was dead, all he had to do was to glide down the stairs, operate that door, and enter the cupboard.

Then, if the door to the room was locked, he opened it with a pair of key-nippers.

A board all along one side of the cupboard had been fixed so that he could raise it, making a broad outlet for the carbonic acid gas to flow out, at that lowest level, down into the hollow wall of the building, and so become disseminated.

When enough had been thus drawn off to permit him to enter the room safely, he would go in, rob the corpse, and then quietly drop the body into the river through the trap-door in the cellar.

I was the first man who, for over a year, had passed a night in Death Room No. 5 to awaken in this life, nor would I have done so had I not unwittingly opened my window.

OKLAHOMA HONEY-MINE.

Jerry McKay, a well-known oil man from Sapulpa, related a very odd story lately. It was that of a bee-sting resulting in the finding of a gold-mine of honey in the rock banks near Sapulpa.

M. L. Kelley and John Chaney, two prominent oil men of Sapulpa, are the parties implicated in the story. Mr. Kelley and Mr. Chaney started out one morning from Sapulpa to drive to a well they are drilling on the boggy land, seven miles west of Sapulpa. The men were about half-way to the well when suddenly they were attacked by a large swarm of bees. The bees swarmed about the buggy and stung the men and horses until they were compelled to seek refuge. They whipped up their team and drove to the cabin of an Indian named Watahee. Here they told of their adventure, and had the pain alleviated by the Indian, who put some kind of preparation on their wounds.

In conversation with the Indian concerning the occurrence, they were told of the many bees in the hills and caves about three miles west of Sapulpa. They did not believe this story at first. He said that the Indians around [illegible] were getting gallons of honey in the caves every day. The oil men went to [illegible]. They [illegible] the place he told them of. On their way they met an old

Indian woman who was carrying two pails of sparkling strained honey. This encouraged them.

They came upon a big post oak in the field. This had been hacked in several places, and the honey was dripping from the cut in the tree into regular pools on the ground. They did not stop at the tree, but went on to the caves. As they neared the rock cliffs they could hear a droning like that of sighing pine-trees, so many in number were the bees. As they came closer they could see a kind of black cloud hovering before the rocks. There must have been fifty big swarms of bees around the rocks.

When they were close up to the cliffs they noticed huge cracks in the rocks and large holes. In these the honey was dripping almost in small streams. There were some twenty buckets and pails setting in the rocks catching the honey. The Indians are said to break the combs of honey with sticks, and let the honey run out into pails. A pail will fill in two days' time. It is said that the finding of this great bee industry by the oil men accounts for the great amount of strained honey the Indians have been marketing. It was thought before that the Indians raised the bees.

The oil men say that the sandstones in the cliffs are just saturated with honey, and a little piece of stone in a bucket of water will sweeten it. The discoverers are at a loss to know how the bees came to be there. It is said by Indians and other old-timers in this section that about ten years ago an old Indian who had a few bees was killed. It is thought by them that his bees went wild and multiplied and increased in number until at present there are millions of honey-makers.

IVORY FROM SIBERIA.

Siberia furnishes a large quantity of ivory to the markets of the world, but the production of it belongs to another age and to a species of animal that does not now exist. The ivory is cut from the tusks of mastodons, whose skeletons are found frozen in masses of ice, or buried in the mud of Siberian rivers and swamps. The northern portion of the country abounds in extensive bogs, which are called urmans. In these are found the tusks of the mastodon, from which it is inferred that these animals lost their lives by venturing upon a surface that would not bear their weight. Of this region and its products Doctor Charles Wenyon writes:

"Even to wild animals these urmans are forbidden ground. The nimble-stepping, broad-hoofed reindeer can sometimes cross them safely in the summer-time, but most other large animals attempting to do so would quickly be engulfed, and this may be a partial explanation of the remains of mammoth and rhinoceros, which are so abundant and so widely diffused through these northern marsh-lands of Siberia.

"In the museum at Tobolsk are numerous specimens of mammoth, and throughout this region they are by no means rare. When an ice-pack breaks down a river-bank, or floods tear up a frozen marsh, or the summer thaw penetrates a little more deeply than usual into the ground, some of these antediluvian monsters are very likely to be exposed.

"In many cases the remains are so fresh and well preserved with their dark shaggy hair and underwool of reddish brown, their tufted ears and long, curved tusks, that all the aborigines and even some of the Russian settlers persist in the belief that they are specimens of animals which still live, burrowing underground like moles, and which die the instant they are admitted to the light.

"The farther one goes northward the more abundant do these remains become. They are washed up with the tides upon the Arctic shores, and some extensive islands off the coast contain great quantities of fossil ivory and bones.

"Tusks which have been long or repeatedly exposed to the air are brittle and unserviceable, but those which have remained buried in the ice retain the qualities of recent ivory, and are a valuable article of merchandise. There is a great market for these mammoth tusks at Yakutsk, on the Lena, from which they find their way to the workshops of European Russia, and even to the ivory-carvers of Canton.

"Various trinkets and works of art are made of these remains, and are sold at the shops and especially at the museum as mementoes of a visit to this graveyard of the mammoth. One of the favorite curios very accurately resembled slices of Russian bread and cheese. But the bread is really a transverse section of one of the long bones of a mammoth, and the cheese a piece of ivory from his tusk. The two joined together were sold at a price which enabled the ingenious contriver to obtain for himself many times their weight of the homely fare which they simulated.

HOW HE FOUND BIG NUGGET.

Johnny Kearn, who has spent many years in the placer mines of the old Highland district, was in Butte yesterday. Mr. Kearn achieved considerable distinction recently when he discovered the largest nugget ever found in the Highland district, it netting him $1,228 when it was sold in the assay office in Helena.

"I will tell you how I found it," he said. "I took up some ground of my own on the head of Poodle Dog Gulch, where no one had a claim. I went up close to a big slide and began working where placer miners had worked forty years ago and again twenty years ago.

"I left the cabin pretty early, and built a fire on a place where it looked like there used to be a side ditch. You could trace it, although it was grass-grown. I thawed the ground out, and then I began digging. Pretty soon I got down to the ground, through the black dirt to the gravel. I had not shoveled for more than ten minutes before I found him. My shovel struck something that seemed hard, and I looked close and saw it was yellow. His nose was pointed right toward me, and you bet I got busy with my shovel, and in a little while I had him in my hands. I saw it was a nugget weighing pounds—he weighed five of them —and I knocked off work and came to town. I took him to Mr. Johnson, of the Clark bank, and he put him in the window, where people looked at him for six weeks, and then he was sold to the assay office.

"Where I found the nugget men had worked forty years ago and twenty years ago. The last work was done by some Chinamen, and they were within three or four feet of the big nugget when they quit work. If they had found him, they would have torn up the entire mountainside looking for more like him."

HOW THE ESKIMO WINS HIS WIFE.

The Eskimo of to-day, having once established his manhood by killing a polar bear unaided, is sent forth by his kindred to seek a wife, and the first girl he can surprise unawares he seizes, and, in spite of her screams and struggles, endeavors to carry off.

This is by no means always an easy feat, owing to the substantial proportions of the Eskimo belle, together with the enormous weight of her clothing, and an exciting race occurs. The lady, darting among the aroused neighbors, dodges her suitor in the crowd, which eagerly assists her, and it is only after he has succeeded in catching her the third time that he is permitted to lead his blushing and excited bride to the hymeneal altar.

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